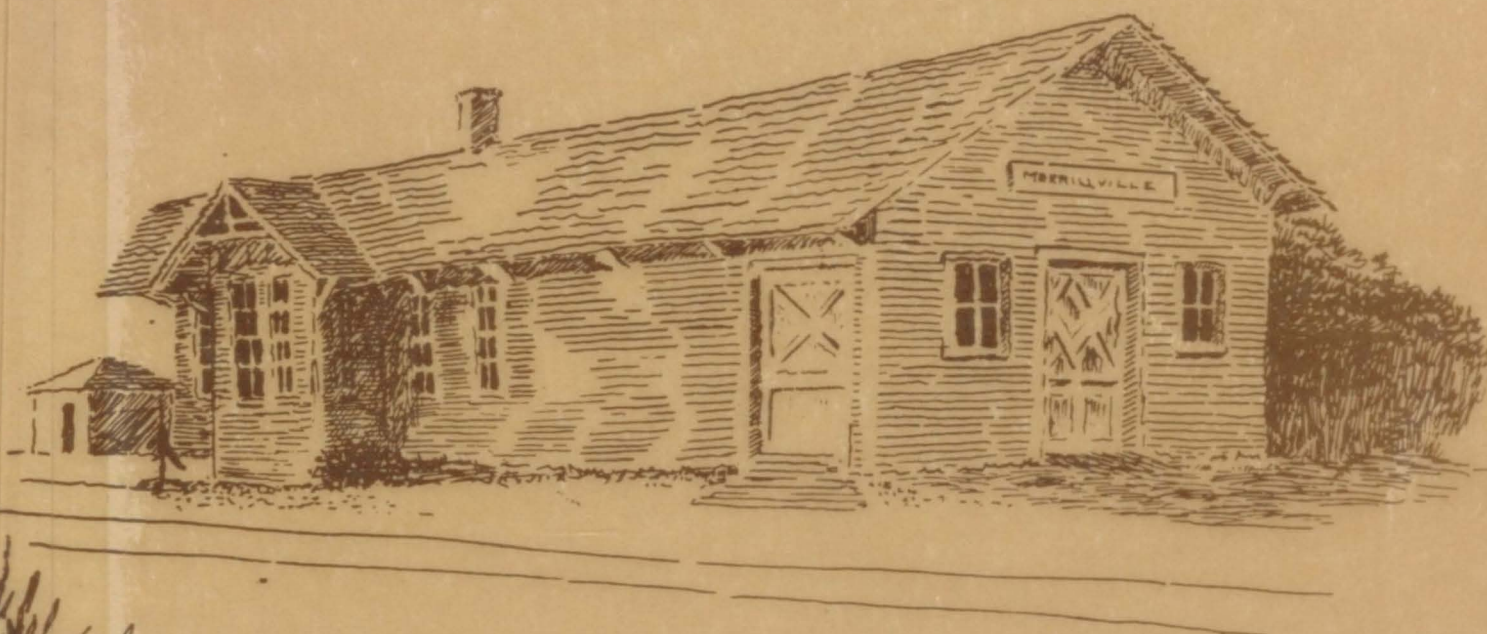


A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF MERRILLVILLE

STORIES, ILLUSTRATIONS, AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF PIONEER BUILDINGS



MERRILLVILLE ROSS TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF MERRILLVILLE

By: Jan Clemens - 1976

Edited by: Elaine Denta - 1991

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Origin and Purpose of Merrillville-Ross Township Historical Society

Solomon once said, "Don't move the markers, keep what your fathers have given you. Preserve your heritage for future generations."

Everything has a beginning and the Merrillville-Ross Township Historical Society also had a beginning. The Society was founded on July 1, 1967. Paul Tully was the first President of the group.

The purpose of the Society has been and still is:

1. To collect and preserve the history of Ross Township
2. To preserve and restore historic landmarks, artifacts and articles of the Indians, pioneers, early settlers, and settlers of Ross Township
3. To stimulate public interest and pride in the township's historic past, its present, and its future
4. To promote a lasting tribute to the founders and developers of the township as well as establishing a cultural attraction for the community

One of the first projects the group undertook was the planting of flowering crab trees in the parkway between Broadway and the Gainer Bank property just north of 68th Place.

A major project for the Society was to get the Old John Wood Mill at Deep River restored. The president of the Society at that time was Jim Halsted. Mr. Halsted had the members sign a letter stating their intent and it was filed in Crown Point and eventually processed.

Now, many years later, the Society still has quite a few of their acquisitions on display in the 2nd floor room settings. There are a few pieces that were acquired from the Wood family heirs including a love seat, a picture and a few small objects.

Members traveled near and far and eventually acquired two cupboards (\$300. each) and a cookstove that cost \$250. The bedroom furniture, cradle, and rocker were purchased in Monticello, Indiana for about \$400. Some of the other pieces were donated.

73RD AND BROADWAY
MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA

Pictured on the facing page is the small, triangular shaped piece of land that is located at 73rd and Broadway. Northern Indiana Public Service Company, owners of the land, granted permission to the Merrillville-Ross Township Historical Society to erect the flag pole.

In 1990, the Society provided the funds for the pole and the installation work was completed by the Town of Merrillville. At the same time a stone marker, removed from the Merrillville High School property, was placed in front of the flag pole.

The Town of Merrillville was instrumental in the landscaping of the corner and now leases the land at \$1.00 per year from NIPSCO. The Town of Merrillville also maintains the upkeep of the property.

The American flag and the State of Indiana flag wave proudly in this Town of Merrillville, Indiana that began as McGwinn's Village in the early 1830s.



The Old Mill is now under the jurisdiction of the Lake County Park System and though they still use some of the Society's articles (they have since acquired quite a few of their own) the Society would be able to display their original pieces (if they had a museum) with a 30 day advance notice to the park system.

Another project involved the placement of a bronze plaque on the current Ross Township Trustee's Office, west of Broadway on the north side of 73rd Avenue. Originally, this was built in 1879 by the Methodist Church and services were held there until 1958. Henry Fieler and his committee were instrumental in this project and the dedication of the plaque took place on August 6, 1986.

Mrs. Bertha Mohler Reder, 1991-1992 president states, "We all can dream. I, too, have a dream. It is that some day we will have a museum in Merrillville."



August, 1986 - Pictured at the dedication ceremony are the following: William Kurtis, President of the Society; John Rooda, Ross Twp. Trustee; Steve Bunjan; Marge Mance; Rev. Fred Wintle, Pastor; Jim Anderson; Cecil Tonagel; Howard Reder; Bertha Reder; Clarence Greimann; Eileen Halsted; Ruth Greimann; and Esther Anderson.

INTRODUCTION

The intention of the authors is to recapture a feeling of Merrillville's past, and to recreate an atmosphere of the times that have spawned our present. The idea, which had its inception in a project undertaken by Mrs. Jan Clemens of Harrison Junior High School in Merrillville, and her 9th grade art class, is particularly appropriate in this year, 1976, that marks the 200th birthday of our nation.

All over the country people are looking to their past, re-examining the events that led them to their present and paying homage to the thousands of individuals whose efforts have enabled them to enjoy a plenitude of benefits today. It is highly fitting that we, too, turn our attention to those who came before us, to acknowledge their hard work, learn from their mistakes, and marvel at our progress.

Those brave pioneers laid a foundation on which we are still building. Only by looking backward can we hope to understand the enormity of the obstacles they had to overcome and thus be reassured that we can handle the difficulties of the present and rise to the challenges of the future.

Within the pages of this book will be found illustrations (hand sketched by students), as well as actual photographs of old buildings. Many of these buildings are still standing and are landmarks familiar to many of our residents. Many of the houses are of historical value; all of them are of human interest, and in keeping with this idea, the authors have tried to reconstruct some of the personalities connected with these buildings.

With some of the pictures there will be a synopsis of family history; with others a description of the activities that took place within the walls and under the roof. Wherever possible, anecdotes and small vignettes are incorporated into the text to gain some insight into the character of the people who dwelled within.

It is hoped that the reader will be able to feel the history of the area by way of the drawings as well as from the verbal pictures. We hope that the buildings will be appreciated for their longevity and not looked on just as old curiosities. These buildings were the stage upon which so much human drama unfolded. They bore silent witness to births, marriages, and death. Dreams were dreamed, arguments raged, some plots were hatched, and plans for the future were made within their confines. Laughter and tears were a part of this drama.

The authors do not claim to be experts on architecture nor on history, for that matter. We are merely citizens with an appreciation for what has come before us and we desire to see it preserved.

Many of our sources are unimpeachable; church records, newspaper articles, and monographs. But our richest source of information--the memories of the people of Merrillville--is not 100% reliable. This is not to say that these pages are riddled with misinformation but rather to concede the possibility that error could exist even though every effort was made to be accurate.

Perhaps a coldly objective author of a scholarly tome may scorn our efforts as amateurish but we are proud that our reconstruction of the past has a dimension to which no textbook could lay claim. Our history has a warmth, a feeling, and a sense of human drama.

It was not cold, hard fact that sustained our predecessors through the trials of inclement weather, deprivation, illness, loneliness, ad infinitum. It was feeling, hope, optimism, confidence, and faith that here was their "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow" if they could only hold on to it. Some gave in to despair and rushed back to the cradling arms of the then more "civilized" East coast; others pushed on in search of new challenges; still others stayed and made a go of it. This book is a tribute to their tenacity and their strength of spirit.

The authors also do not pretend that this history is complete. Time and space limitations do not permit as thorough and detailed a description as we would have liked. It is our intention to follow this with a more completely documented version. We hope we will be forgiven our sins of omission for this is an ambitious project and the lines had to be drawn somewhere.

This book does not recount the deeds of nationally known historical personages, but rather the trials and everyday events of the persevering pioneer families and the structures they built. Buildings and individuals were selected for inclusion in this book according to several criteria; relative importance, availability of information, and general interest to the reading public. This is not to say that if something or someone was excluded it was not important. More likely, it was because information was not readily available.

There is apt to be some confusion about the many names that have been applied to our town, which having been officially established as "Merrillville" in December of 1971, is reputed to be the largest and fastest growing town in Indiana.

Merrillville encompasses some 31 square miles that was once densely covered with forest. Its gently rolling topography lends itself easily to cultivation and, blessedly, the soil is fertile. The area is drained by Turkey Creek and Deep River and there is no lack of rainfall. The boundaries, for the purpose of this book, roughly run from 57th Avenue on the north, U. S. 30 on the south, Hobart on the east and St. John Township on the west.

The entire area was once the province of the Potawatomi Indians, a peace-loving nation of hunters and fishermen. In 1834, a clearing in the woodland was used for ceremonial purposes and went by the name of McGwinn Village. A year later, a white man by the name of Jeremiah Wiggins swooped down on the village and charmed the Indians with his gift of gab and fascinating trinkets.

McGwinn Village thus gave way to Wiggins Point and under that name became a well known stop for wagon trains bound for Joliet. At one time 16 roads (trails would be more apt) radiated outward from Wiggins Point. Sometime after Wiggins' death in 1838 the settlers who had followed him here decided that Centerville would be a more appropriate name. Later still when the Merrill brothers (Dudley and William Merrill) made their imprint on community life, Centerville became Merrillville.

Other settlements had been mushrooming on the former hunting grounds of the Potawatomis and were given names such as Deep River and Turkey Creek (from the waterways they bordered), Ainsworth, Lottaville, and Rexville. At one time Lottaville was a U. S. Post Office address. In 1848, all of these settlements, including Merrillville, were collected under the name of Ross Township.

In 1971 the designation of Merrillville was applied to everything included under the former Ross Township. So, the name applies to two different entities: the whole amalgamation of settlements and to a specific part of that union, namely to one settlement that originated as McGwinn Village. Thus, when the reader encounters Turkey Creek, for example, he should properly regard it as a section of present day Merrillville or alternatively as a sister settlement of the former use of Merrillville.

The reader will notice that even though the majority of the houses were built on the same basic plan, i.e., in the form of a two story temple with a lateral wing, most of the houses were individualized by their builders and subsequent owners in such a way that makes each one unique.

Unfortunately, some of the homes are no longer standing. Others have been drastically altered and do not resemble the original in any way. In most cases, the accompanying illustrations depict the original structure and the modifications are included in the text to help the reader identify the present day structure.

The alert reader will notice the recurrence of certain themes, for instance, the evolution of building materials utilized in the construction of homes. Many early settlers relied on hastily thrown together log shelters. Later, more suitable residences were constructed from the most readily available materials: wood and fieldstone. Decades later, the family member occupying the ancestral home may have built a modern brick residence or may have updated the faithful frame house with new siding.

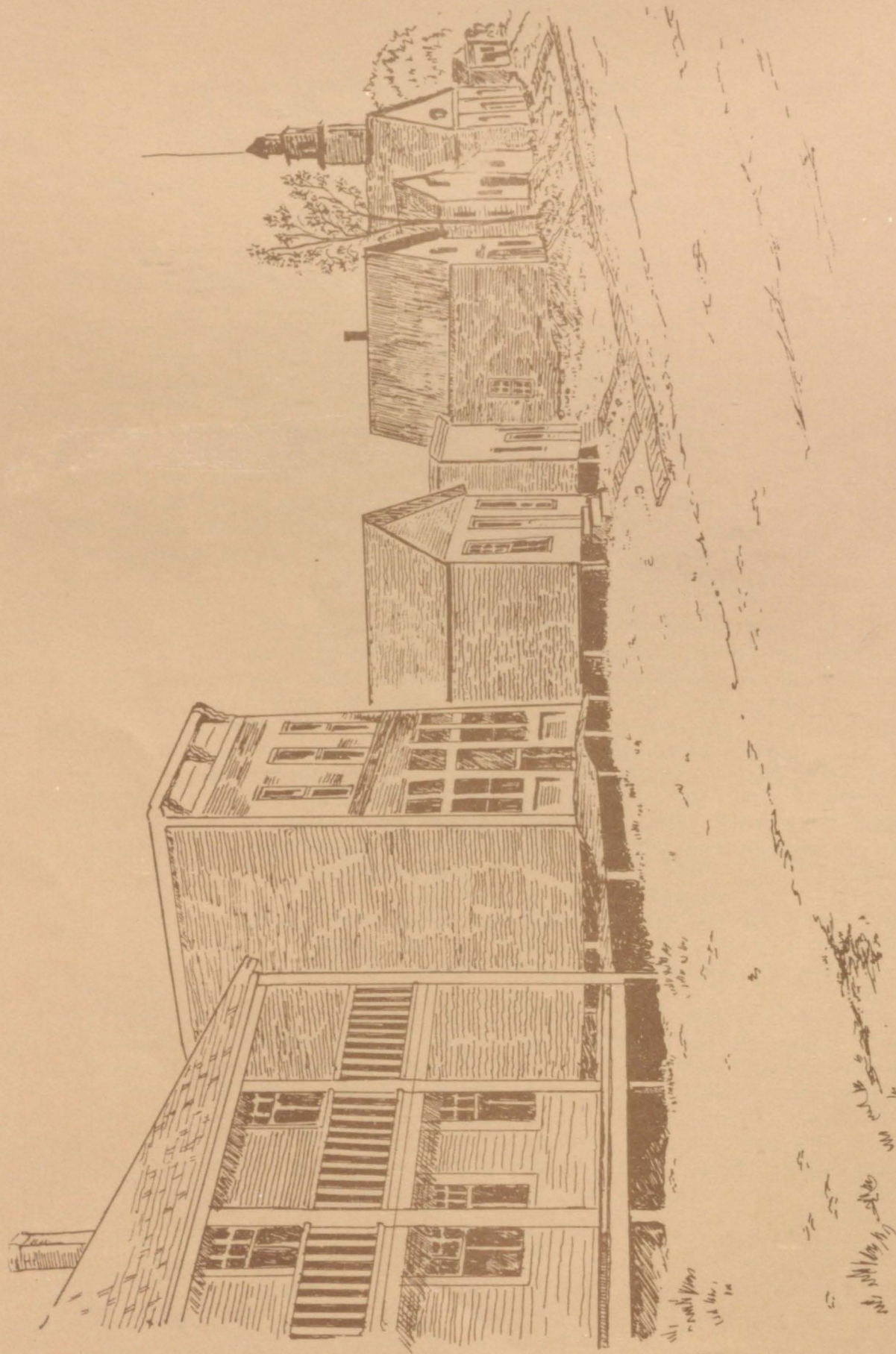
The history of the Catholic Church (now known as Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church) at 5855 Harrison Street, is quite illustrative of this sequence of events i.e., log cabin, stone church, brick church.

Another theme which pervades most of the accounts is the importance of farming and, as with the building materials, there is a time-dependent progression. Initially everyone in the area farmed. Every family raised its own food. Improved methods gave the next generation more free time and we see the development of doctor-farmers, statesman-farmers, etc. Further improvements led to higher crop yields requiring fewer growers. This freed still more people for some other pursuits, leaving the art of agriculture in the hands of those who loved it best and who were able to perform it most successfully.

It is our hope then that these stories will be informative, educational, and at times entertaining. Moreover, we would like to think of our narrative as an incentive to trips down "memory lane".

As a result of jogging memories, we hope there will be many occasions at which families will sit down, reminisce, and share their childhood experiences with their children and grandchildren.

We sincerely hope that you will enjoy this book as much as we enjoyed researching, writing, and illustrating it.



MAIN STREET IN MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA

A street scene on the Old Lincoln Highway about 1907. The buildings illustrated here are the California Hotel, Stoltz's General Store, Merrill Hall, Ladies Aid Building, Burt Saxton home, Zuvers home, Barton residence, the Methodist Church, and the Vaness house.

BOYD-SKINNER HOUSE

It was on this property that the history of the Town of Merrillville, Indiana began.

Jeremiah Wiggins, the first known pioneer to settle here, built a log cabin on land that is now behind the present house, (one block east of Broadway on 73rd Avenue) and the following year Ebenezer Saxton moved in and claimed the 80 acres. At this point Jeremiah Wiggins disappears from the records.

In 1877, a man by the name of Morgan of Furnessville, bought the land from the descendants of the Saxtons and erected the present two-story, red brick dwelling. It was the most elaborately designed house in town. The ornate, Italianate architectural style features a cupola on the roof that confers a stately, dignified quality to the dwelling. The house remained almost the same as when built except for the side addition that was constructed by Eli Boyd when he purchased it in 1879.

Since 1879 the house has been in the Boyd family, though not in a direct line. Alex Boyd, son of Eli Boyd, inherited the estate in 1924. Alex, who was born in 1881, married Lee (Flora) Boyd, a teacher from Lockport, Indiana. Besides farming, Alex served as a Trustee of Ross Township. The election preceding his term of office is remembered by folks because he won by one vote!

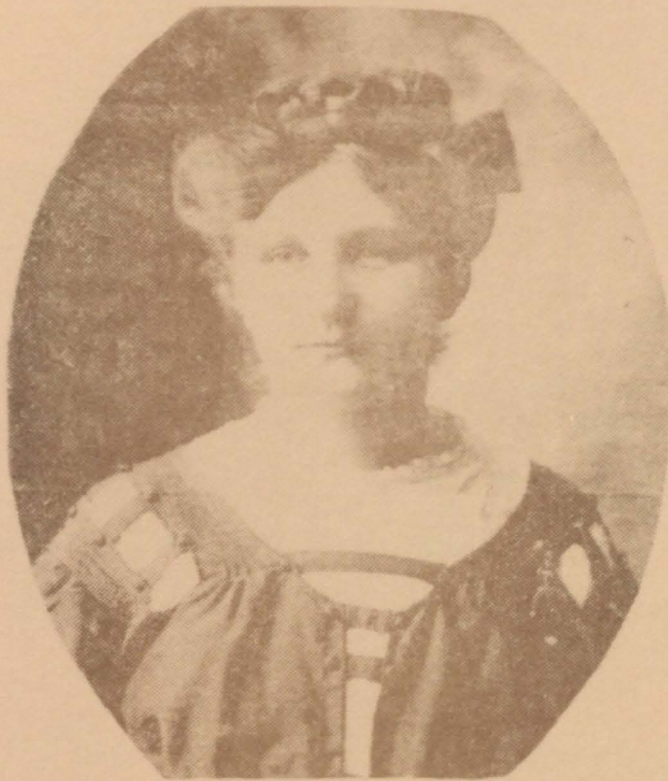
Alex employed his sister, Alice, as his secretary for a salary of \$100 per year. Alex is remembered as a friendly, intelligent man with a promising future. When he died in 1924 with no children to survive him, the property passed on to his wife, Lee. She later married Olind Skinner, a college professor, whom she met while attending Indiana University. Lee (Flora) Boyd Skinner died in 1943 and left the historical house to Olind Skinner who still owns and occupies the house.



Rear view of Boyd-Skinner Homestead



ALICE (BOYD) HALSTED.

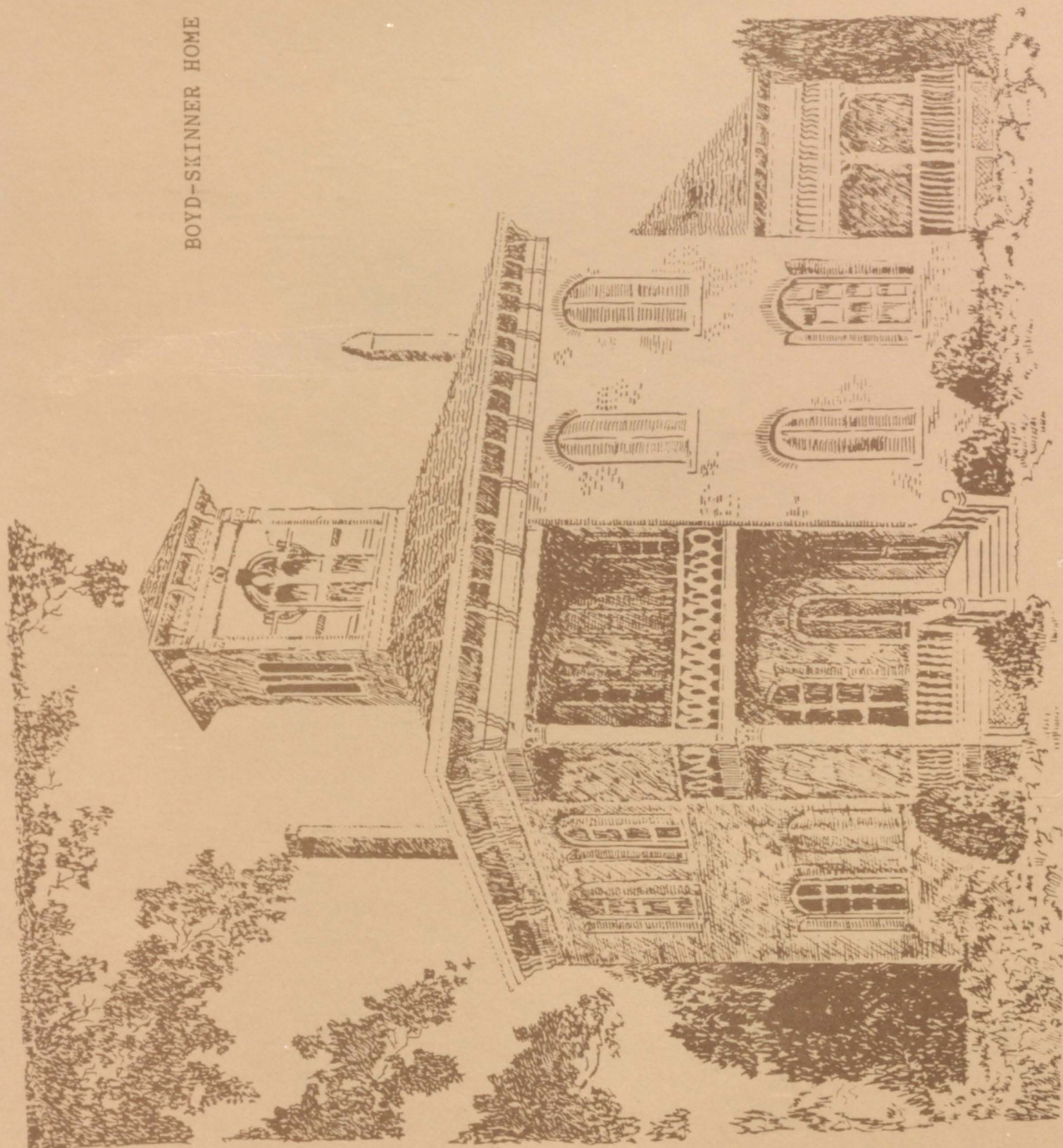


Alice (Boyd) Halsted, born July 11, 1890, was the only daughter of Eli and Agnes Boyd. She married Albert Halsted son of another prominent pioneer family.



ALEX BOYD

BOYD-SKINNER HOME

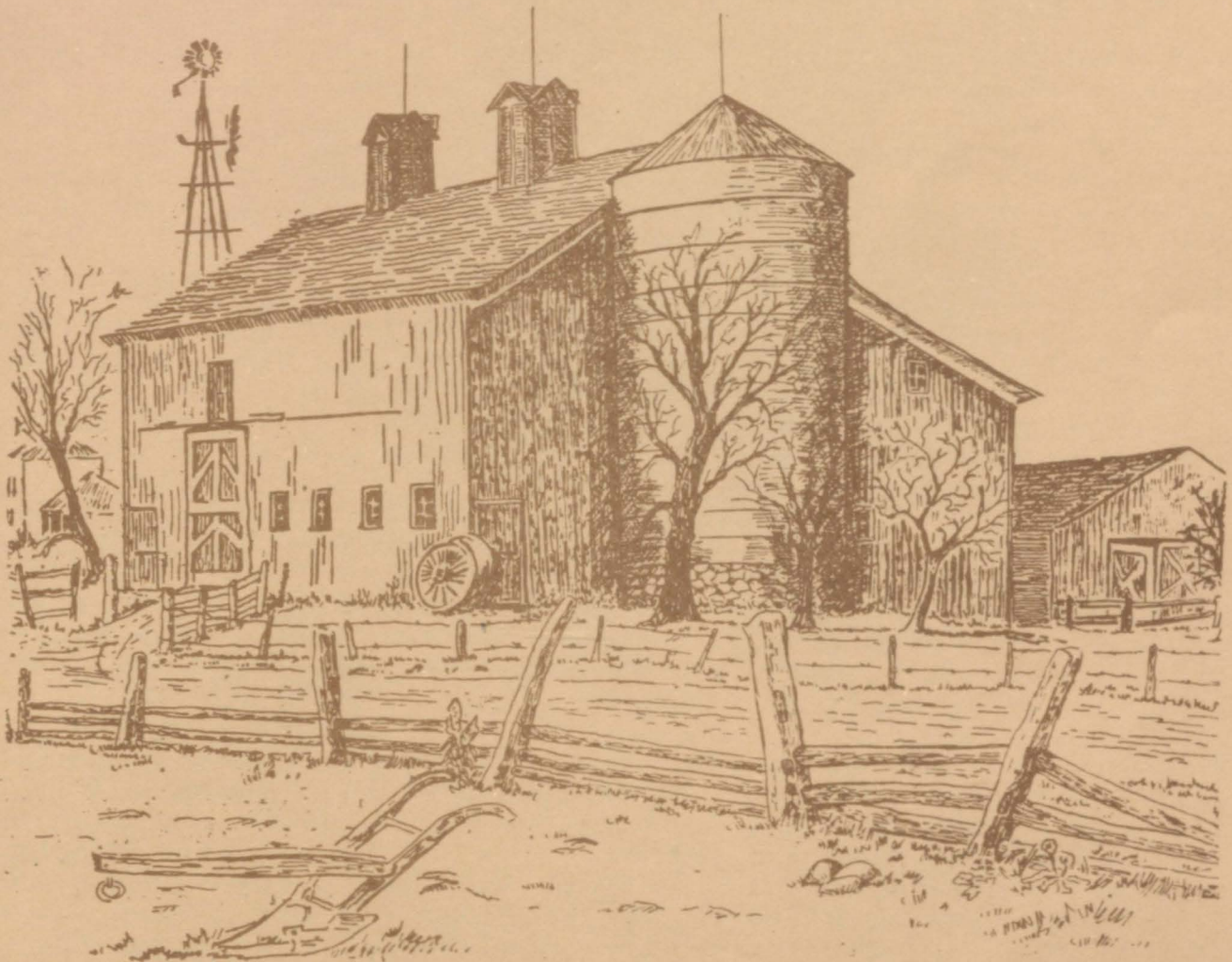


BOYD-SKINNER BARN

This immense old barn stands as a visual reminder of the importance of farming to the economy of this area. Its location on East 73rd Avenue, near the old business section of town, is significant in that it points to the debt society owes farmers.

It is a fact that there would be no businesses to speak of were it not for pioneer farmers who developed production methods that have the potential to feed the world, freeing others from the burden of subsistence-level farming and, thereby, allowing them to pursue other professions or trades.

Today, the barn, sans silo, is used for the storage of hay and grain and is a favorite of local artists, particularly art students of Pierce Junior High and the summer art classes taught by Mr. Dick Wilde.



BOYD-SKINNER BARN

POPP HOMESTEAD

Many of the old homes of Ross Township go unnoticed by the citizens. It is our hope that the association of a history with the buildings will remedy that situation by enhancing the reader's appreciation of these well-built structures. Many of the histories trace several generations of occupancy by the founding family and end with the home being sold outside the family to initiate a new history.

Some stories recount years of struggle and proud passage of land and buildings from father to son only to have the home meet an ignominious end at the hands of vandals. Some buildings, unfortunately, are demolished because the growing neglect renders them fire or health hazards. Happily, we have uncovered a story that is particularly interesting because it involves the return of a homestead to its founding lineage. The family in question is the Popp family and the home is to be found on what today is Madison Street.

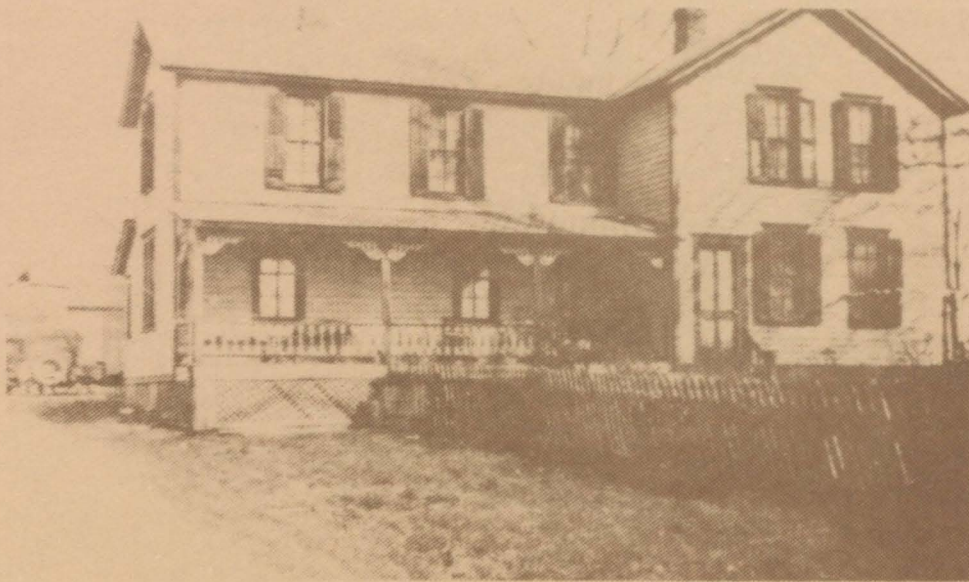
The Popp saga begins with the arrival of Andrew and Margaret (Wehner) Popp and their four children to this area from Germany in 1845. They staked a claim on land that borders Madison Street and constructed a log cabin. While living there, the Pops were blessed by the birth of two more children, one of whom, Andrew, built the house as shown in the illustration.

Andrew grew up on this farm but left it temporarily after his marriage to Susan Weis. He returned to run the farm and lived there until his death in 1921. After his death the land was divided among his children. His son, Edward, inherited the house and he maintained it for several years. Then came the Great Depression; hard times and scarce money forced him to give up the house.

George Waltz purchased the nine room dwelling and it became the home of his parents, Joe and Rose and their two daughters, Ann and Almira. When Almira married, Ann moved away and the house remained vacant for 20 years. Even though George Waltz diligently cared for the grounds, the house began to deteriorate from disuse.

However, in the early spring of 1975, Robert Vlasic and his bride, who were both fascinated by old homes, purchased the old house. Robert, who happens to be the great grandson of Andrew Popp Jr., and his father, Joseph Vlasic, have worked many hours repairing, renovating and restoring the old structure. The original five bedrooms on the second floor have been transformed into three larger bedrooms and a bath. A furnace was installed to provide heat that was previously furnished by two stoves--one located in the kitchen and one in the parlor. This 19th century home now has running water.

Interestingly, during the process of tearing out the walls, Robert found lumber bills amounting to \$225. for two large loads of wood that were hauled by wagon from Chicago to build the house in 1880.



POPP HOUSE

Andrew and Susan (Weis) Popp, seated center front
and seven of their children:
Mary (Vonderheid), Margaret (Schmidt), Albert,
Edward, Andrew, Frank, and Charles.





Clara and Albert Popp

Albert, son of Andrew and Susan (Weis) Popp, was united in marriage to Clara Doffin in 1921. They were blessed with four children: Barbara Spurr, Sheldon, Audrey Kordys, and Thelma Saberniak. Albert was employed as a superintendent for the Lake County Highway Department for 25 years and at that same time served as a precinct committee man.

SCHNABEL HOMESTEAD

As one nears Colorado Street on 61st Avenue you will find the property that used to belong to the Schnabels, well-known citizens of Ross Township in the early 19th century. Several homes were built on this large estate and the oldest home belonged to John Schnabel, the progenitor of the Schnabel family of Ross Township.

The accompanying illustration reveals the home to be typical of farmhouses of the period, though this one was larger than most. The first floor contained a parlor, a dining room and kitchen, a pantry, and two bedrooms. The cooking stove in the kitchen kept that room warm and a pot-bellied stove in the parlor was used for warmth in that room. The second floor contained five large bedrooms each opening off a center hall that ran the length of the house. The picture does not show a cool, clear stream that meandered past the tree-shaded house. Included in the landscaping were huge lilac bushes and a beautiful flower garden.

During its 110 years of existence, the house was occupied by four generations of the Schnabel family. John Schnabel, a native of Germany, was the first to arrive in Ross Township in 1848 after having settled initially in Pennsylvania.

John's son, Fred, born and raised on the farm left it after his marriage to take up residence with his bride in a smaller home across the road. When John retired, he and his wife exchanged houses with Fred and his wife.

All of Fred's children were born in the large house and when he died in 1901, Fred, Jr. took over the management of the property. All but one of Fred Junior's children were born in the ancestral home.

Fred Jr. died in 1928 and his widow moved to Hobart, Indiana. The estate then passed on to their son, Ralph. Ralph married Ruth Blim from Crown Point, Indiana and they occupied the home for 33 years. In 1961, they sold the property and moved to a comfortable old dwelling in Crown Point that had been in the Blim family for many years.

Also in 1961, the large two-story home that had seen the birth of four generations of Schnabels was torn down to make room for the modern brick home that stands in its place today.



SCHNABEL HOMESTEAD

OLD CALIFORNIA EXCHANGE HOTEL

As networks of thoroughfares were cut out of countryside formerly accessible only by paths, there grew a need for way stations to relieve the discomfort of long distance travel. A host of inns and taverns sprang up along stage routes to meet the demand. One such establishment erected in 1842 was the Old California Exchange Hotel on the Old Sauk Trail (now 73rd Avenue) in Merrillville.

Travel at that time was very uncomfortable to say the least. A day's journey may have been no more than 10 to 25 miles but those were hard miles on bumpy dirt roads, full of ruts and strewn with rocks. The "coach" lacked shock absorbers and had poor suspension.

When the coach was filled to capacity, passengers were forced to sit shoulder to shoulder and endure each other's flopping around as the vehicle swayed and rocked. It might also happen that one person would subject his fellow travelers to some unpleasant personal habit--like smoking malodorous cigars. This created additional dimensions in unpleasantness in the poorly ventilated carriage. It seemed that the windows did more to let in the choking dust churned up by the horses and wheels than to let out the clouds of smoke.

It is no wonder then that these inns were a welcome sight to the dust encrusted, perspiration soaked travelers who craved food, drink, a bath, and a comfortable bed in which to rest their bruised backsides. California Hotel proprietor, Myiel Pierce saw that there was a profit to be made from servicing these simple needs.

The Old Hotel was originally a house. In fact, it was the first house in town. It was a large frame structure and boasted a double tiered porch. Various additions were made to it as the inn changed hands over the years.

The Old Hotel also had facilities for the travel-worn horses. The drivers could groom and feed the horses and let them rest for the night. Moreover, the Hotel served as a mail drop. That is, the stage delivered local mail to the proprietor, and the townspeople would come to him to claim their letters.

Originally the Hotel did not have a bar. When one was added, the Hotel became a big draw for the locals as well as the wayfarers. Townspeople would gather there and, perhaps enlivened by the spirits they drank, hold heated political debates. Others might discuss grain prices and cattle raising and still others might be content to just sit and while away the hours over a mug of ale.



OLD CALIFORNIA EXCHANGE HOTEL

The photo depicts the building that replaced the original hotel which had been destroyed by fire in 1910. This structure, built in 1912, served the town as a restaurant and hotel under many managers and under many names including "Christy's Eat Shop".

In 1942 the fire department declared it to be a safety hazard and took the necessary steps to raze the structure.

The Hotel changed hands several times. Three of its owners were: Thomas Hoffman (1855), Daniel Sawyer (1860), and George Elbert (1895). In its time the stage-route rest station offered a respite from the hardships of travel to immigrants coming to settle here and to the adventurous people who were moving on perhaps to stake a claim in the California gold fields. And, when fire claimed the Inn, in 1910, more than a half century of Hoosier hospitality went with it.



CHRISTY'S EAT SHOP AND HOTEL
(Replaced the Old California Exchange Hotel)

JOHANN HEIN HOUSE

Johann Hein was a German emigrant who came to this country around 1860. At first he settled in Chicago, but later he and his brother, Peter, relocated in Ross Township to lend their carpentry skills to the house building boom going on in the community.

In 1881 Johann built a home for his family on the northeast side of the Grand Trunk Railroad tracks off Madison Street. The house contained nine large rooms, a pantry with ample storage space, a summer kitchen, and front and back porches. These were certainly adequate and comfortable accommodations for the parents, their five children, and the hired help.

Son Joseph took over the house after Johann's death in 1907. He bought out his siblings' shares of the farm and lived on the land for 30 years. In 1937, failing health induced Joseph to take up residence in Crown Point and to rent out his farm. Tenant farmer, Emory Baker (now deceased) worked the land for six years before retiring. Joseph Hein died in 1940 and his nephew, George Hein and wife, Matilda, purchased the land in 1942 and moved to the house when Baker vacated.

George and Matilda lived in Johann's house for five years before they built a brick home just north of the home they were living in. Later, George had Johann's old home moved across the tracks, and the house now stands on the west side of Madison Street.

The years have seen several owners and many changes to the house including the removal of the back section of the house. The house is currently owned and occupied by John and Betty Lou Erdelles.

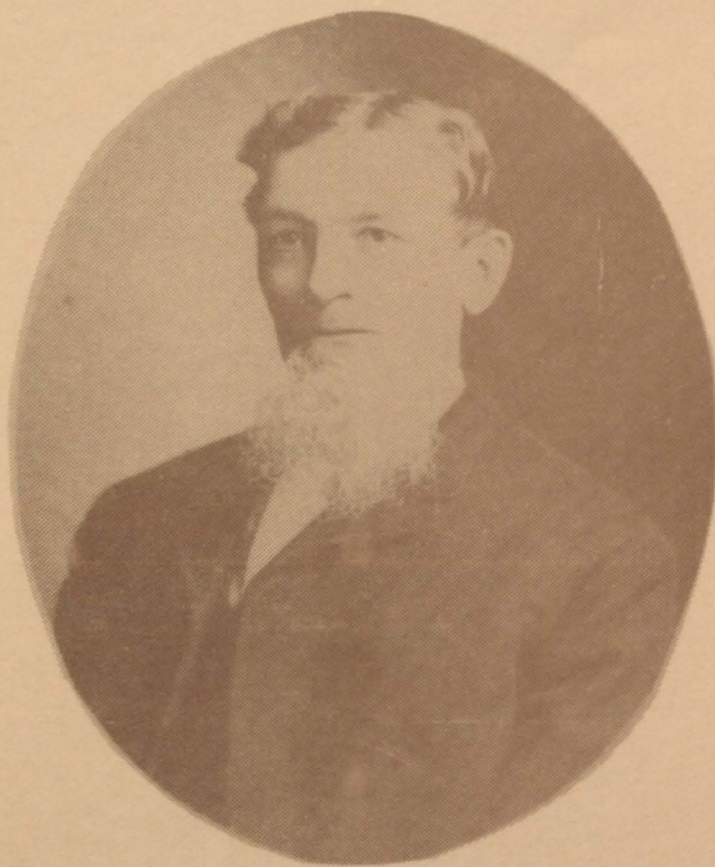


JOHANN HEIN HOME

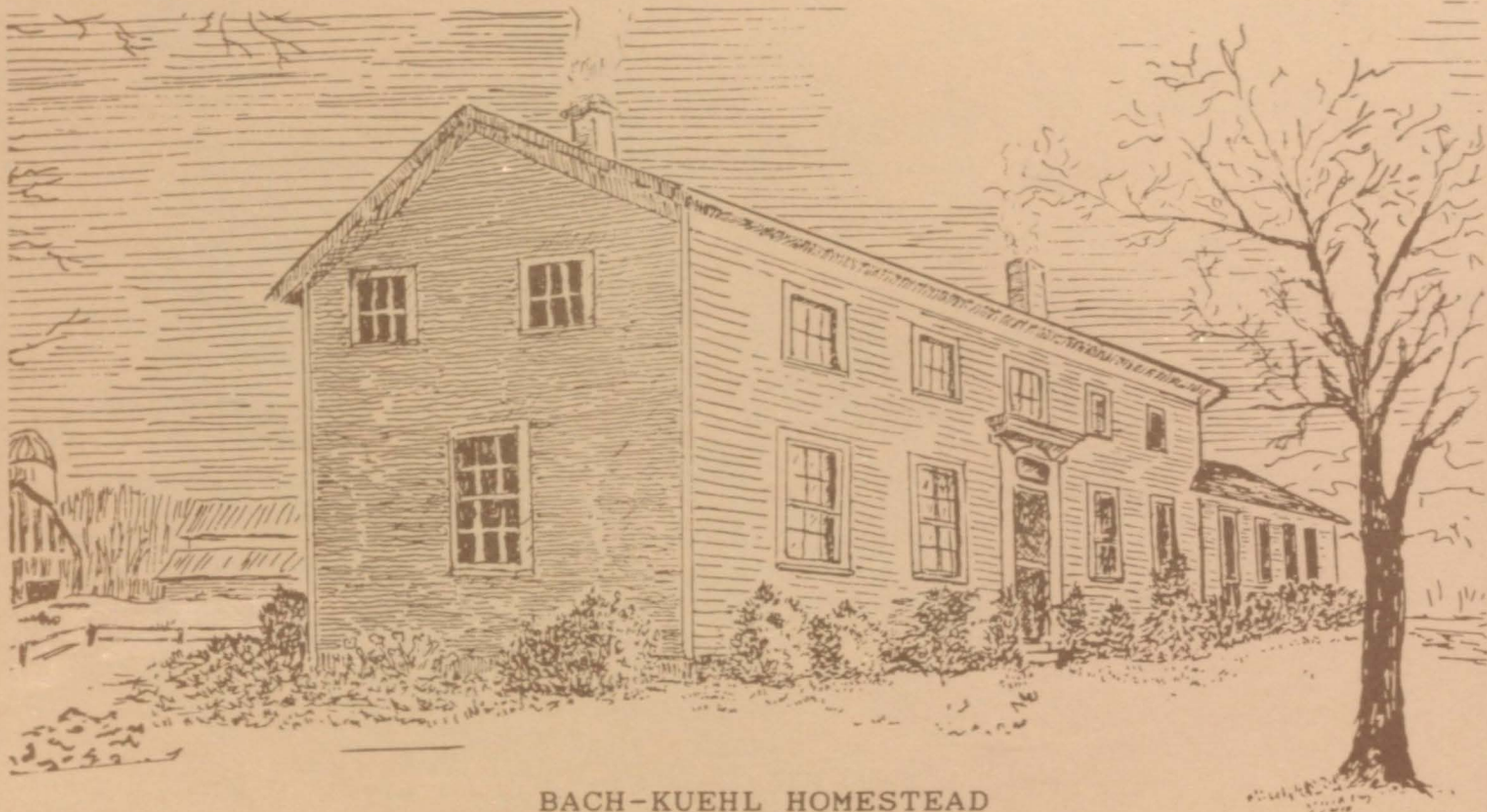
Pictured above are the five children of Johann and Margaretha (Hoffman) Hein. From the left, Peter, Christine, John, Barbara, and Joseph. The two small children in the buggy are grandchildren, Francis and Willard.



Margaretha (Hoffman) Hein



Johann Hein



BACH-KUEHL HOMESTEAD

In 1846, Gottlieb Bach left Germany to seek a new life in America. He settled on a 40 acre farm on the north side of what is now U. S. 30. At that time, however, there was only a very narrow dirt road hollowed out of the fields by the passage of wagons.

Initially, Gottlieb erected a log cabin to shelter his family until a more suitable home was built in 1857. The spacious, federal-style residence harks back to times when the home was the stage for all of life's dramas--births, marriages, and deaths.

The 12 room house was constructed to provide living quarters for two families. A large, wide hall separated the living quarters of Gottlieb from those of his son, Carl Wilhelm and his wife. The house contained two separate cellars although there was a common entrance to the cellars in the floor of a one-room brick addition that was connected to the house.

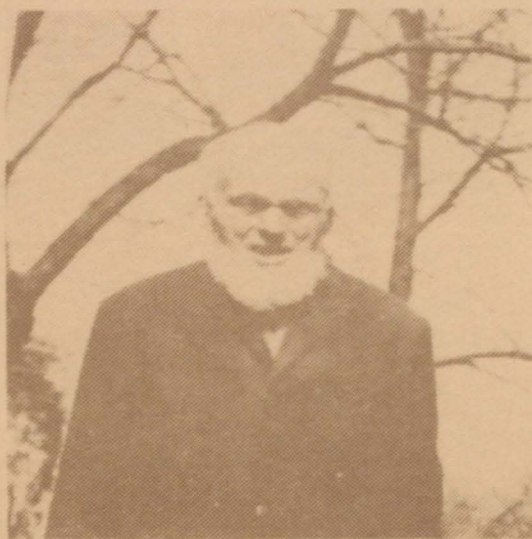
Although the structure was quite roomy and boasted eight foot ceilings, there was no elaborate detail to the design. The house was known for its sturdy construction--built to serve two families well and to allow each family their privacy.

There were two concessions to adornment in the house: a beautiful railing on the hall staircase and carpets that lined the house. With a typical German penchant for cleanliness, Mrs. Bach untacked these carpets each spring, cleaned them outside, placed fresh straw for padding, and then replaced the carpets.

Gottlieb Bach died in 1883 leaving an unusual will regarding the disposition of his house:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to my wife, Louise Henrietta Bach, the use of the west half of our house where we live now, for and during her natural life together with the use of the cellar of said part of the house, also privileges of well, cistern, and outhouses connected with the homestead. The west half of the house, after her death, I bequeath to my son, Carl Wilhelm Bach."

In 1920, Gottlieb's granddaughter Henrietta and her husband, Henry Kuehl, bought the house and reared their six children there. Although three daughters, Mrs. Blanche Blum, Mrs. Lydia Baker, and Mrs. Lillian Butcher still live in the area the house passed out of family ownership when it was sold in 1946.



Carl Wilhelm Bach



Anna Bach



BALZAR FRANZ HOME

BALZAR FRANZ HOMESTEAD

Balzar Franz came to America from Germany in 1843. At the age of 23, he left home and became gainfully employed driving cattle to Chicago markets and working on other people's farms until he could amass enough capital to purchase his own land. He purchased a farm in 1860 and eventually it became a very prosperous dairy farm with over 500 acres.

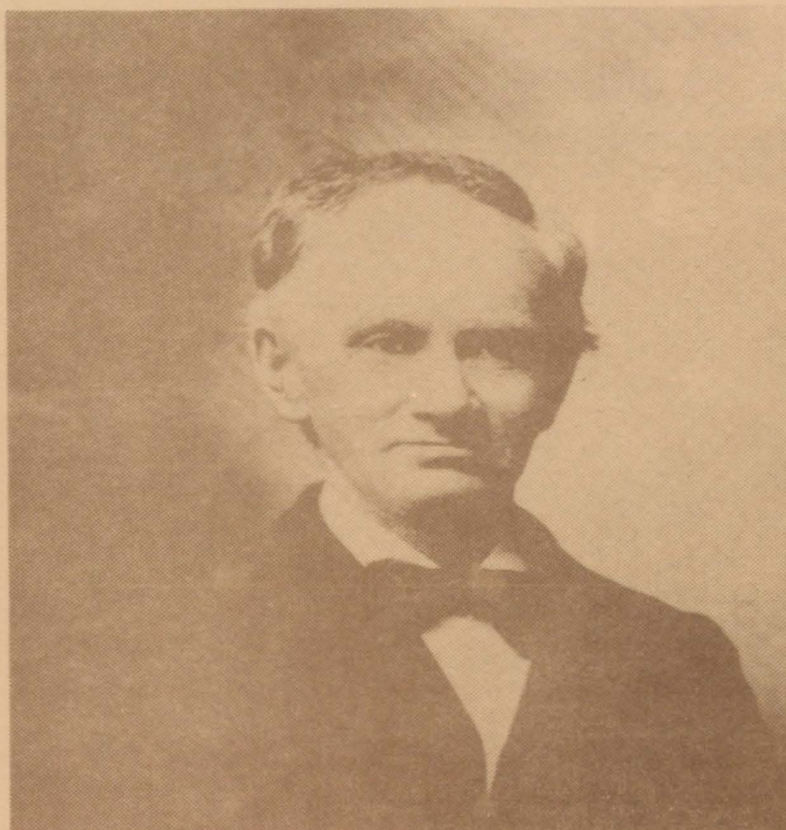
An eight room, two-story house was built to accommodate his family of nine children plus the hired help. This home is located at 6825 Taft Street once known as Cleveland Avenue. When the house was built, a wagon path ran at the rear of the property, on the east side.

As in other houses at that time, a pot-bellied stove in the kitchen provided warmth for the kitchen and dining room. Registers in the floors above allowed the heat to rise and heat the bedrooms. The living room was never heated, merely closed off during the winter months. In 1925 the house was wired for electricity.

When Balzar died, all of his children received a share of the property. Son George bought out his brothers' and sisters' shares, and he and his wife Lucille (Demmon) Franz worked the farm until George's death. Lucille then sold the land to the Gary Country Club, now called Innsbrook Country Club. The house itself is currently owned and occupied by George and Helen Balog.



Wedding picture
of George and Lucille Franz



Balzar Franz

CARRIAGE HOUSE

The Carriage House, located at the busy intersection of 73rd and Madison Street and surrounded by other businesses, was once a fashionable town house.

The building was erected in 1878 amid other such houses and is depicted in the illustration as an oblong, two-story frame house with a low pitched gable roof. An attractive feature set this house apart from the rest: two recessed window panels bordered by wide lintels on either side of the front door made a most impressive entry. A large porch, spanning the side of the house which faced the street, provided the family with the opportunity to participate in a favorite pastime--people watching! Another feature still evident on the house today is the scalloped trim on the gable; simple enough by today's standards but very stylish at that time.

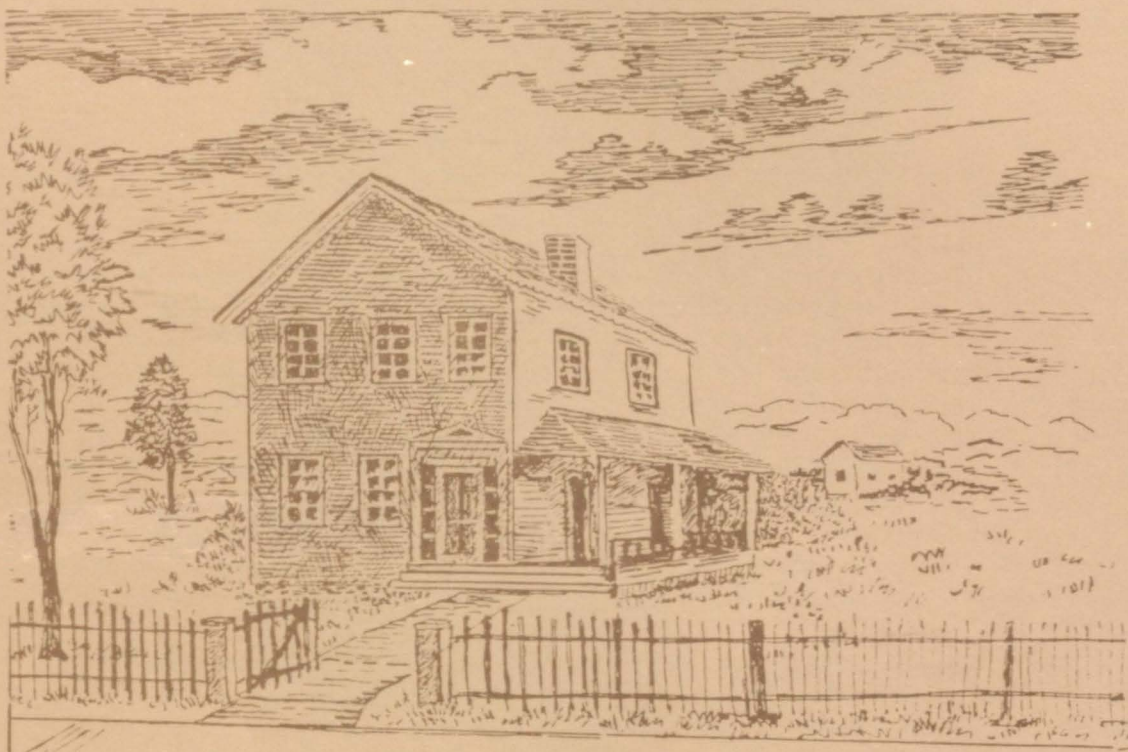
The house was built for George T. Randolph who was associated with what was the town's "elite"--those families who were well-to-do and influential in the community. George's sisters, brothers, and his own children sought their marriage partners from among first families of Merrillville: the Merrills, Pierces, Woods', etc. George was married to the proud and beautiful Caroline Woods, daughter of Bartlett Woods, one of the most important figures in all of Lake County.

Even if one could not ascertain the Randolphs' station in life from their lineage, one would surely take the clue from the picket fence Caroline had surrounding her well landscaped yard that abounded with fragrant flowers. Such a fence was considered a "mark of aristocracy" in those days.

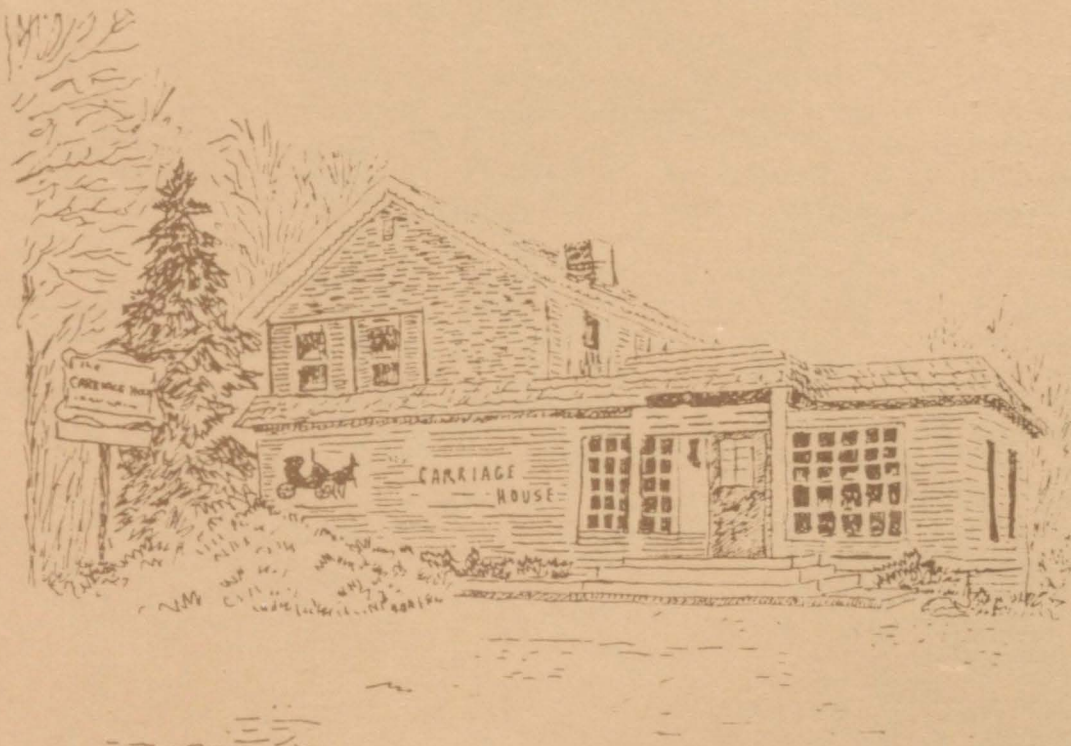
Around the turn of the century, the Randolphs sold their home and took up residence in Hammond, Indiana, where they lived for several years until they retired to Crown Point, Indiana.

The next known occupants of the house were Charles and Nettie Niksch who were retiring to town in 1905 from years of farm life. The couple enjoyed 11 years of town living until Charles died in 1916 at the age of 53. Nettie, who was without the benefit of social security and welfare programs as we know today, found employment as a practical nurse tending to the needs of others. In 1930 failing health forced her to leave her home and enter a nursing home where she died in 1942.

In 1968, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Brown of Crown Point purchased the house and remodeled it to accommodate their growing antique business. The drawings below illustrate how the house looked before and after remodeling.



Original house of George and Caroline Randolph
(Now known as the Carriage House)



Carriage House as it looks today



Nettie Niksch



Phillips Family - 1919
 Front Row: Alfred, William, and Carrie
 Back Row: Harold, Hulda, Elinor, and Walter



Pictured above are Alfred's parents and brothers:
 Front: Alfred, his parents: George and Elinor, Edward
 Back row: Henry, William, Daniel, Francis

PHILLIPS FARMHOUSE

The Phillips farm house, built in 1885, was located on the southeast corner of Old Lincoln Highway and Whitcomb Road. It was a two story frame dwelling that, in its prime, is pictured on the next page.

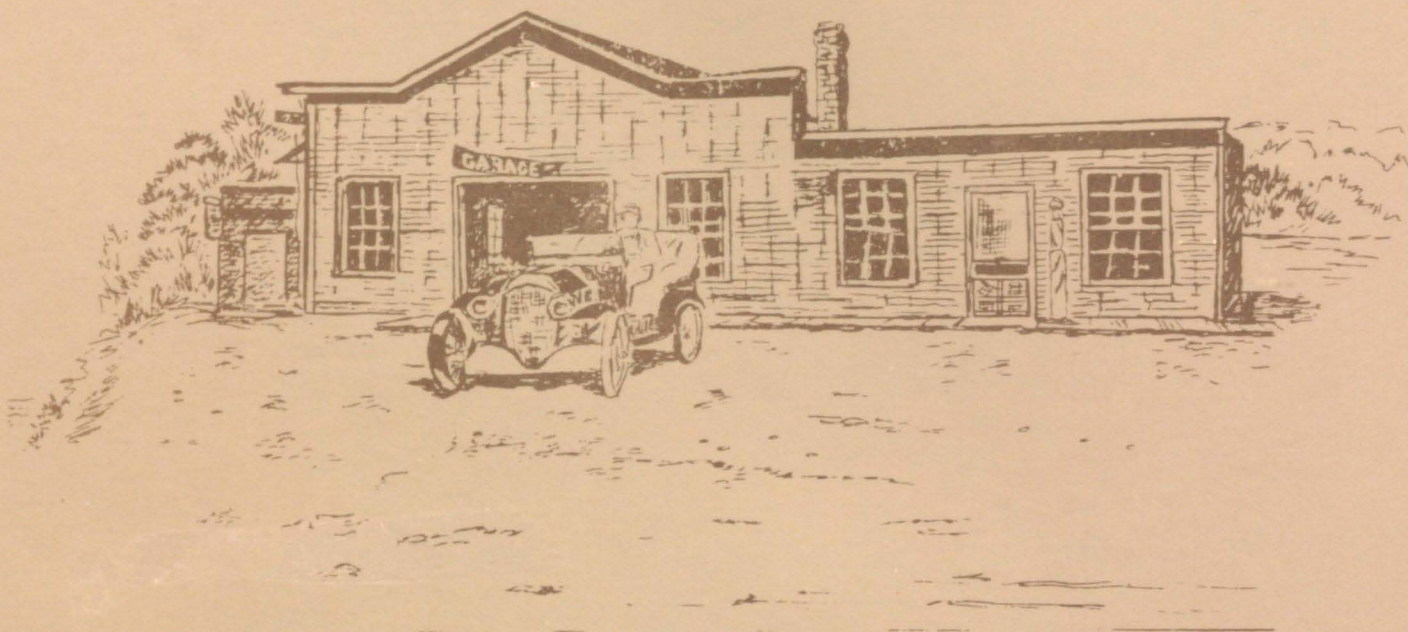
The picture presents an artistic setting in which the figures, infused by a flickering light effect, appear to hesitate momentarily to glance at their viewers. It is as if at any second Alfred Phillips will move on with his horse to take care of the tasks of the day. The children will continue to play in the shade of the oak trees while Carrie takes time to sun her youngest child.

Today the setting is almost the same. Open corn fields and massive oak trees still encircle the site. The family members, of course, have long since moved on and the house is a mere pile of rubble. One only can wonder what stories the trees could tell as they've stood mute witnesses over the years.

Alfred was the son of George and Elinor Phillips, who were among the earliest settlers of this county. They settled on a farm in St. John, Indiana, where Alfred was born and raised. In early childhood Alfred developed the know-how of farming and as he approached manhood, the pursuit of that occupation became his choice. He purchased a farm in Ross Township where he brought his bride, the former Carrie Wayman. Here their six children were born. The three older ones, Blanche, Walter, and Elinor are pictured below. To many people in this area, Elinor is known today as Mrs. Elinor Stowell.



THE PHILLIPS FARMHOUSE



ELBERT'S GARAGE

The one story frame garage on the northeast corner of Madison Street and 73rd Avenue was built by George Elbert around the turn of the century or as early as 1890.

George, who had used it for a short time, leased it to many would-be businessmen. In 1920, the lower side addition (seen in the illustration above) was constructed to house the Town Library. Prior to that time, Mrs. Lillie Pierce, Librarian, had operated the lending service from her living room. Later on, a Mr. Nicholson took over the side addition and opened a barber shop.

The garage section also changed hands. It was run for a while by Herbert Saxton and Charlie Boyd and still later by the Walter brothers, Howard, Leslie, and Clarence who, in 1917, opened a new Buick Garage & Repair Shop. The three brothers eventually relocated their business across the road to the Keilman Building. The original Elbert building was destroyed by fire in 1930.

IDDINGS HOME

At the west end of the historic Sauk Trail in Merrillville stands a dwelling that was known as the old Iddings home. The house was built by one of the most prominent pioneers of Ross Township, Dr. Homer Iddings who left his mark, not only on the town of Merrillville, but on the whole of Lake County.

Dr. Iddings, a graduate of the Detroit College of Medicine, emigrated to Ross Township in 1883. He was known far and wide for his many years of practice, administering to the sick in both the north and central portions of Lake County.

It is a mere conjecture as to the time the house was built, but the authors believe it was erected about 1885. The two-story residence boasted white siding, a double gabled roof, a broad porch spanning one side of the house, and elaborate porch and door trim. Neatly trimmed lawn surrounded the home which was shaded by a few large oaks and some elm trees.

Today the home, which is still on its original site, is owned and occupied by the William Hutchens family who purchased it in 1970. From 1971 to 1976, Mr. Hutchens has been remodeling the interior as well as the exterior of the dwelling. It is indeed gratifying to see a lovely home such as this one being renovated and saved for historical reasons as well as once again creating an attractive addition to the town.



HOME OF DR. AND MRS. HOMER IDDINGS



Dr. Homer and Mary (Clark) Iddings
in their home in Merrillville



The five Iddings sons
John, Harold, Harry, Morris, and Fred
(All were born in the Merrillville home)

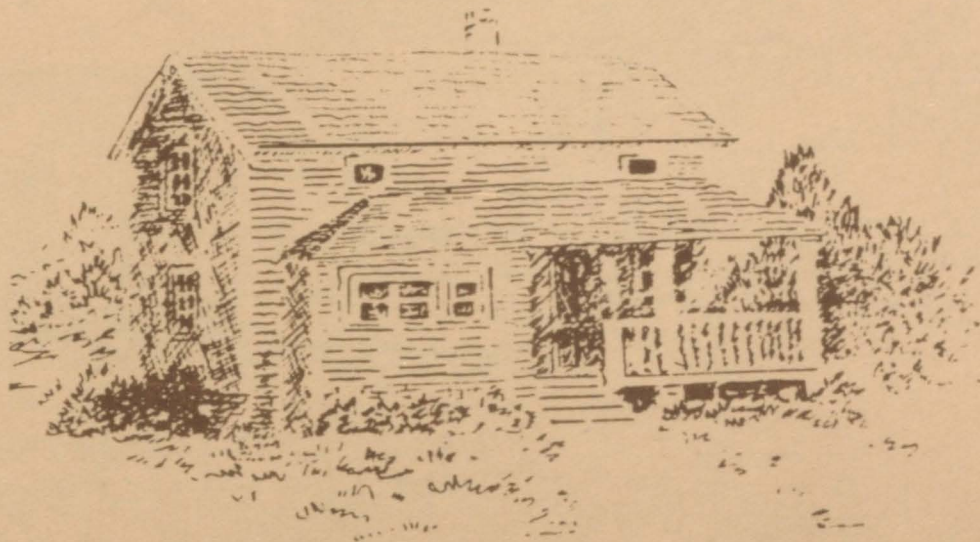
WALTZ HOME

This house has had an interesting history, to say the least. Originally, the structure was a log cabin built by an unknown owner on the site of the present day Kolby Garage. In the late 1800s, the building (considered to be one of the finest houses in town) was occupied by a Mr. Sponier who plied his trade--coffin making--in his home. In those days, the form fitting casket was very fashionable and their manufacture was quite an art.

Many of Merrillville's old timers can recall that as children they would run, rather than walk, past the house because of a superstitious fear of coffins. Mr. Sponier also lent his carpentry skills to wagon making in a shop next door--a more common occupation which gave the town's children no cause for alarm.

In 1916, possession of the cabin fell to William and Etta Bowman and they had the house moved to its present site at 7230 Madison Street. The Bowmans remodeled the house, added a front porch, but left the log personality intact. More changes were made by a James Caugherty, the next owner of the house.

In 1930, George Waltz (son of a pioneer family who settled in Ross Township in 1893) and his new wife, Nancy, purchased the made-over cabin and have lived in it ever since. George added the front bay window to house Nancy's vast and unusual collection of potted plants and flowers. The main structure of the home still has the original logs in some places.



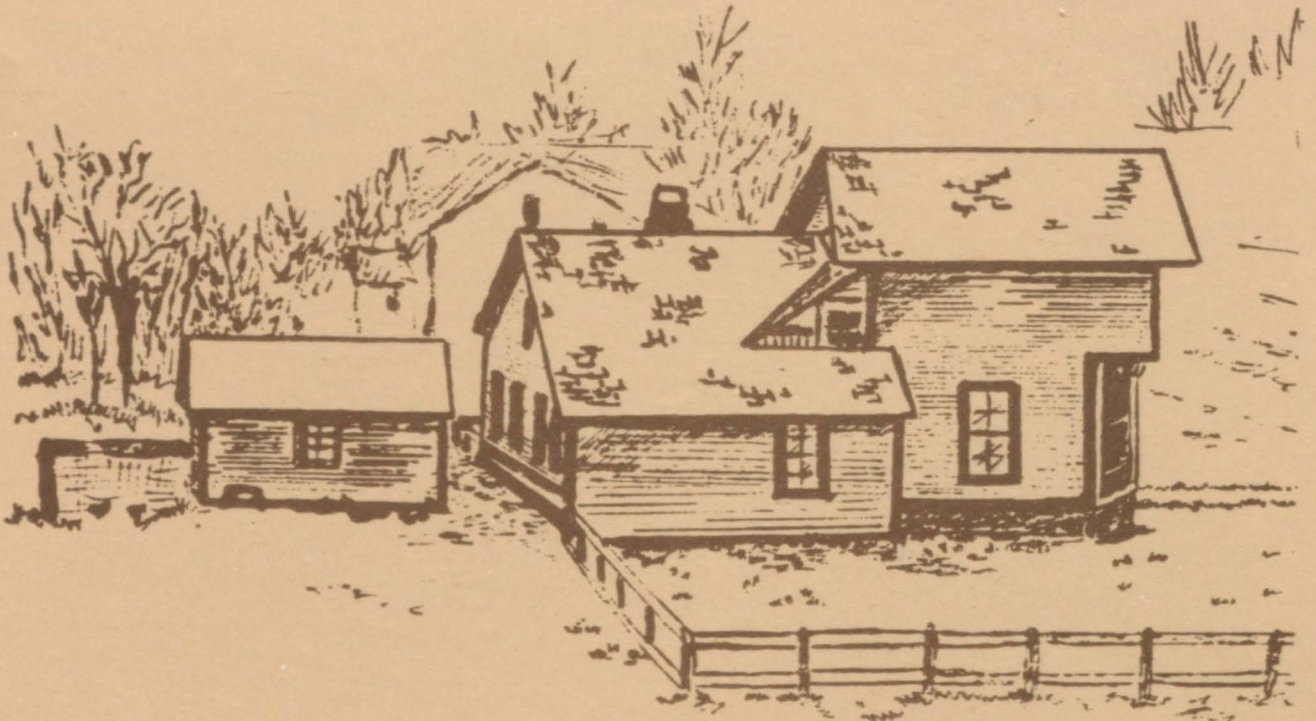
WALTZ HOME ON MADISON STREET

FLOYD PIERCE HOME

In the center of Merrillville's old business section stands a two-story white frame building which houses the First Lady Beauty Salon, owned and operated by Brenda Karas. The building was not always a commercial unit, but originally was the home of Floyd Pierce, who was a member of one of the pioneer families in the community. The Pierce family owned the building from 1895 to 1972 when Mrs. Edith (Pierce) Hire, a daughter of Floyd, sold it to the present owners.

Floyd Pierce was a Township Trustee and was also known for his influential role in the matters of education in Ross Township. His main goals were better schools and improved classroom accommodations.

Like the Waltz home, the Pierce home had an unusual history. Mr. Pierce moved an old log structure, (believed to have been the old harness shop, built around 1850), as well as the old building which was formerly the second known Merrillville Post Office, from across the street to his property. Working with these two buildings, Mr. Pierce added a large two-story gabled addition which contained a living room, dining room, and upstairs bedroom. Today, only the front portion of the original house remains. The structure has been remodeled by the present owner.



FLOYD PIERCE HOME
Now the First Lady Beauty Salon

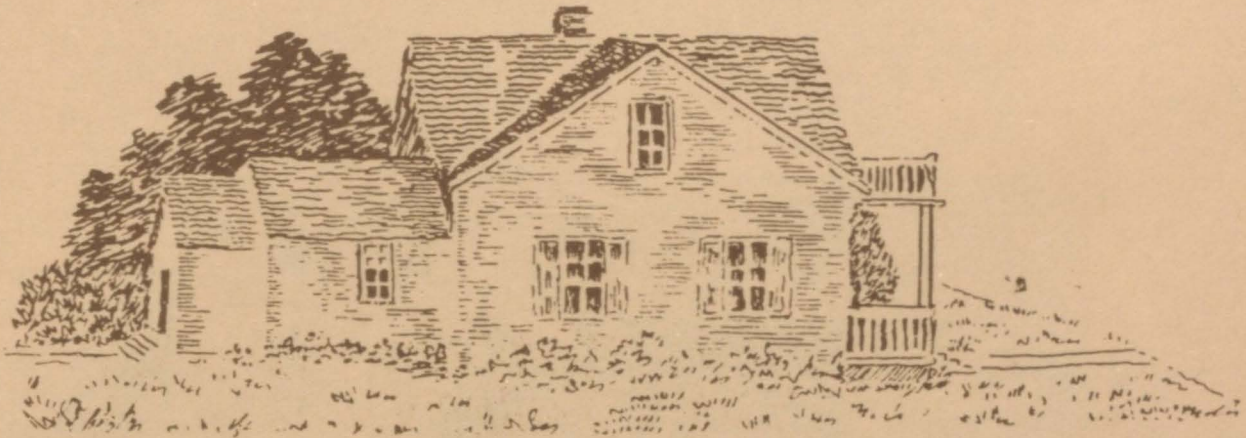
THE COFFEE HOUSE

The Coffee house, located on 73rd Avenue in the middle of Merrillville's old business section, next to the former Floyd Pierce home, was built circa 1885 by James Coffee, and today bears little resemblance to the original structure.

The present day two-story frame house, with a lateral facade and a small porch is rather classic in style. Originally much larger, with four gables and a one-story connecting room in the rear (now removed) the house features a double railing on the front porch which has been preserved through the years as if to respect the builder's wishes.

The Coffees, though the parents of six children, left no descendants bearing the Coffee name in this area. Most of the children relocated to other areas. The daughter, Alice, married Myiel Pierce and some of their grandchildren still reside in the vicinity.

James, and his wife, Martha, originally lived on a farm located near the corner of 73rd Avenue and Colorado Street. They enjoyed their in-town residence and participated in many local activities. Both were devout Methodists and were well known for their work in the church. Moreover, Martha lent her time to the Ladies Aid Society, and served as the president of that group for 15 years.



THE COFFEE HOUSE

FOREMAN FARM

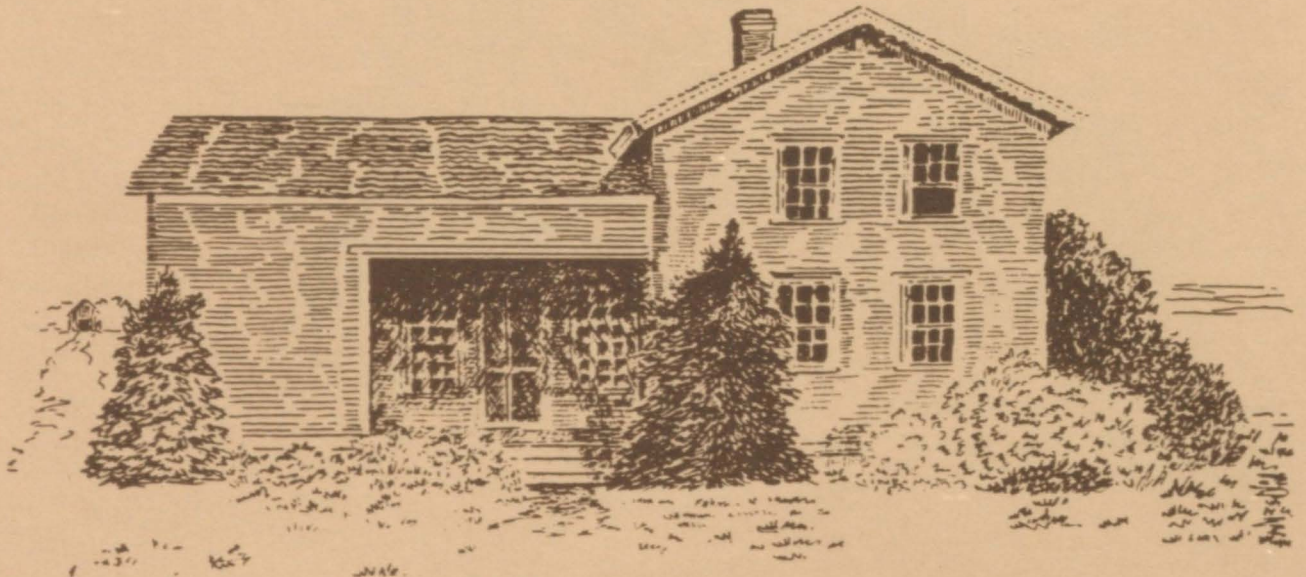
The Foreman Farm, located on a winding, tree-shaded country road, one mile east of Ainsworth, calls to mind a John Constable landscape, so peaceful is its setting.

Joseph Foreman, a German immigrant, built the eight room, two-story white frame house that stands at the heart of this farm which has been in the family since 1875. The well-cared for dwelling features a recessed porch and is devoid of any noticeable embellishment. The interior has seen only the minimal amount of remodeling through the years.

Across the road, a large, weather-worn barn bears witness to the passage of time. A windmill stands next to the old springhouse--both indispensable structures to farmers of days gone by. The windmill captured the energy available from moving air and used it to pump water to fill the troughs for the cattle. Should there be a period of doldrums, without even a whisper of a breeze, the farmers had the arduous task of pumping the water by hand. The springhouse was usually the first outbuilding erected, so useful it was. In the winter it protected the previous fall's harvest from freezing and in the summer it kept foodstuffs cool.

It is of historical interest to note that the two-room Ainsworth School (described elsewhere) was built on land that was donated by Mr. Foreman to the community. The land reverted to the Foreman family when the school outlived its usefulness.

Joseph Foreman had two sons to help him run the farm. Today, Otto Foreman, a grandson of Joseph, is the third generation to dwell in the house. The house still has much of its originality with the exception of some wrought iron work at the front entrance.



FOREMAN FARMHOUSE

THE TONEY SMITH DAIRY FARM

This once successful and well known dairy farm was located at 5580 Harrison Street across the road from Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church. The farm and associated structures have undergone considerable changes in the one hundred plus years since George Hoffman first purchased the 160 acre plot of land and log cabin. George, a native of Bavaria, made his way to America in 1845. In 1880, he built a new house that still stands today along with its many modifications and additions.

When George passed away, the ownership of the property passed on to his son, John George. John (later known as "George") had another farmhouse moved to the land and incorporated it onto the family home. The result was a very comfortable dwelling for the family which included his wife, Barbara, and their seven children.

The house was heated by wood-burning stoves in the kitchen and dining room. The bedrooms were unheated so the occupants relied upon piles of heavy quilts and woolen blankets to protect them from the chill of Indiana winter nights.

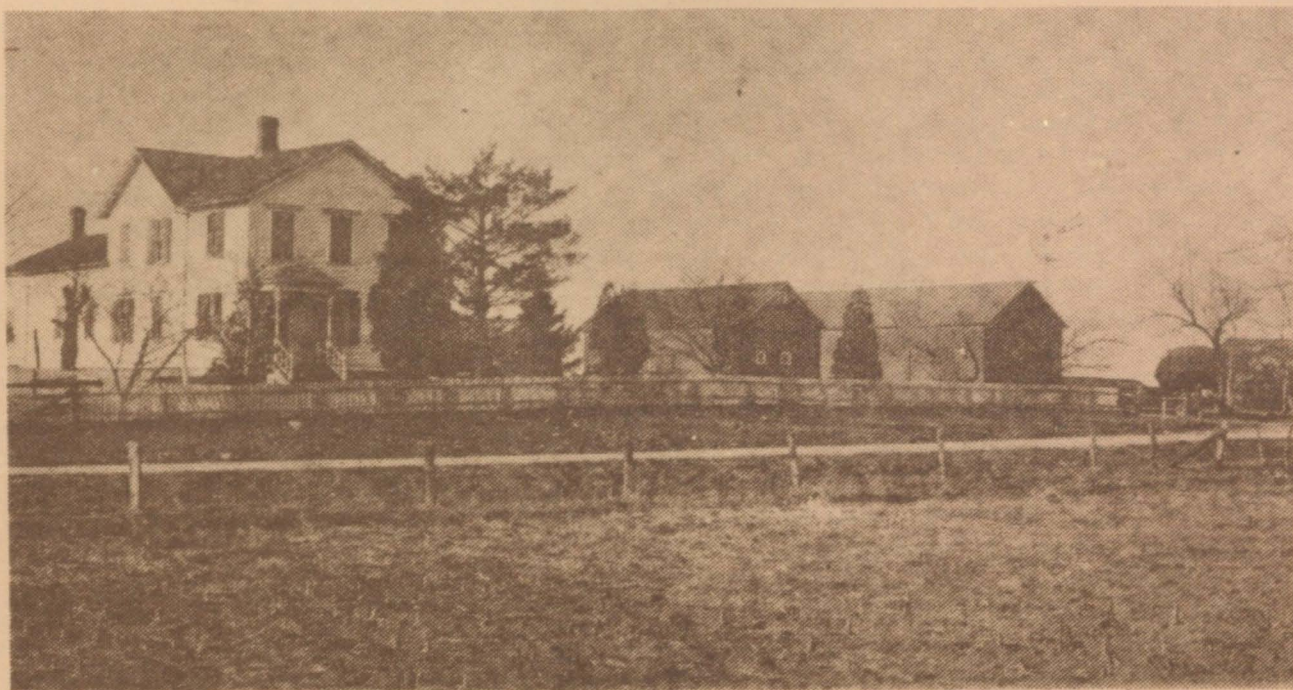
Getting up early to light the fires in the stoves and to prepare a breakfast of eggs, potatoes, hot rolls and honey was a task that fell to the Hoffman daughters.

John's daughter, Margaret, married Anthony "Toney" Smith and the couple took over the operation of the farm in 1928. The couple bought up more land, added new buildings, and built a small milk house where the family sold milk for the extremely low price of three gallons for fifty cents! Later a larger dairy store was erected to handle their large and lucrative business.

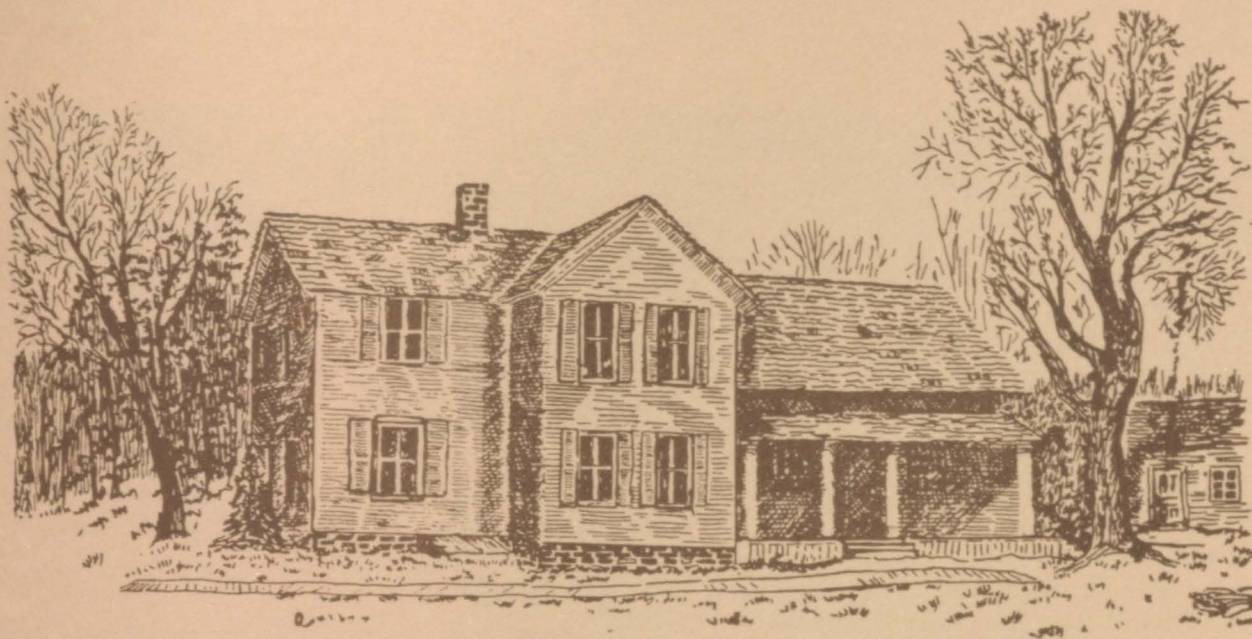
Since the dairy operations have ceased, the dairy store has housed several different business enterprises.

The dairy store was a favorite shopping place for local residents and the farm was a popular place for the school children whose tours of the premises included a survey of the livestock, an overview of the operations, and a special treat, a hayride!

Mrs. Toney Smith, who has spent over 70 years in the farmhouse, recalls the contentment and happiness she shared with her siblings in childhood and with her husband and their seven children all the while living in her ancestral home.



TONEY SMITH HOME AND FARM BUILDINGS



TONEY SMITH FARM HOUSE



GEORGE AND BARBARA HOFFMAN
Parents of Margaret (Hoffman) Smith

The Toney Smith Family (1930)
From left: Raymond, Mrs. Margaret Smith, Joeehanna, George,
Anabel, Anthony, Gerald, Clarence, and Mr. Toney Smith

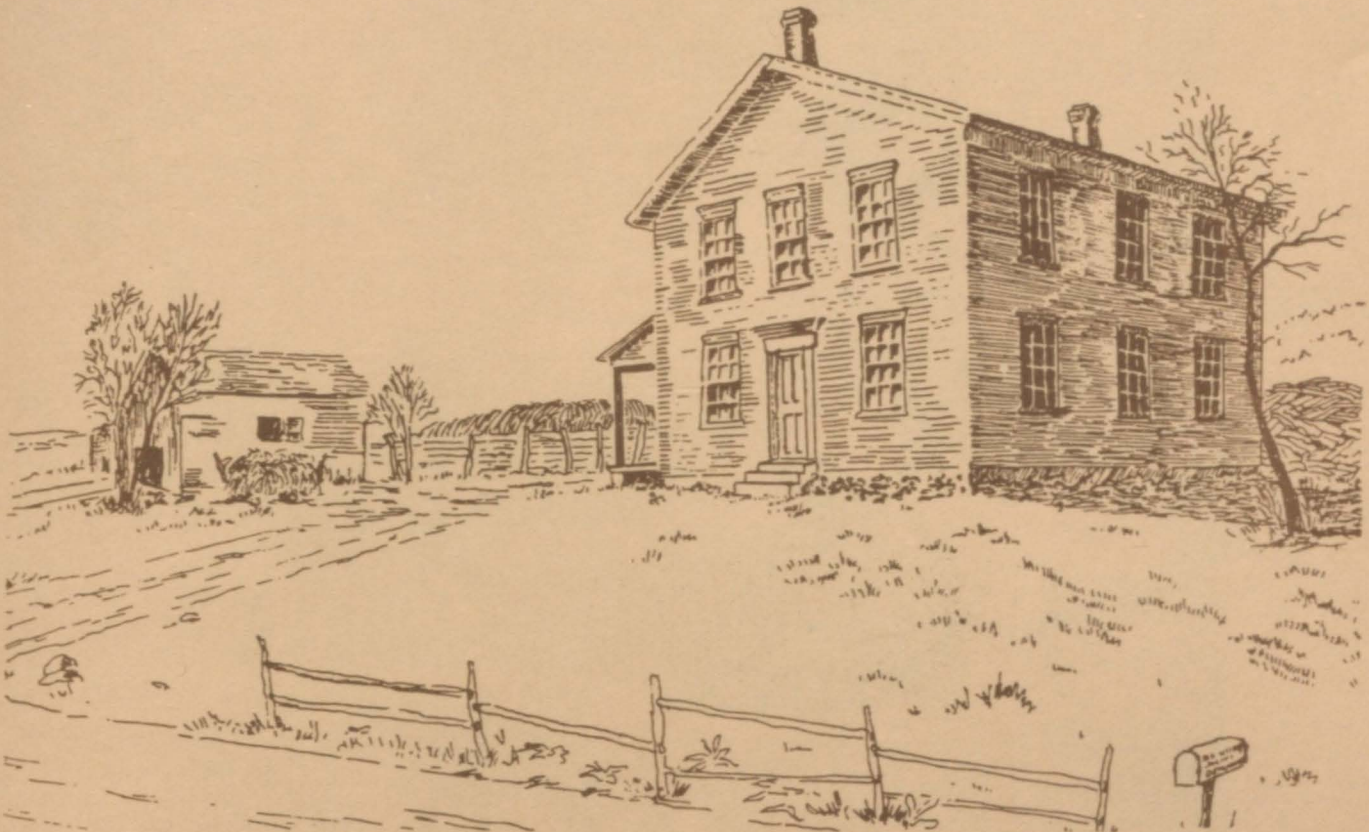


JULIUS DEMMON HOMESTEAD

The Demmon house, which no longer stands, was built about 1855 on a slope overlooking the old Sauk Trail a mile west of the town of Merrillville, Indiana. The modest two-story building was a typical midwestern farmhouse--simple in plan but structurally sound and functional to withstand the punishment that twelve children (six sons and six daughters) could dish out. The modest dwelling had a single concession to adornment--the side porch--which besides being decorative, offered shelter from the hot summer sun.

This house, which in later years became weather stained and dilapidated, was once a well kept shelter for a family which was representative of the earnest, hard-working type of people who made valuable contributions to the community. The house was a hub of activity from which the twelve children radiated outward, each building his or her own home on their individual share of the two thousand acres Julius Demmon left to them. You will find many of these homes illustrated in this book.

Today, Julius and his wife Nancy, and their children are gone, but they have left many descendants in this area to carry on the family name.



JULIUS DEMMON HOME

The Demmon Family
 Nancy and Julius Demmon
 Clarissa, Anne, Mary, Eliza, Martha, and Alice
 Clinton, Charles, John, Daniel, George, and William



BURGE-IFYU FARM

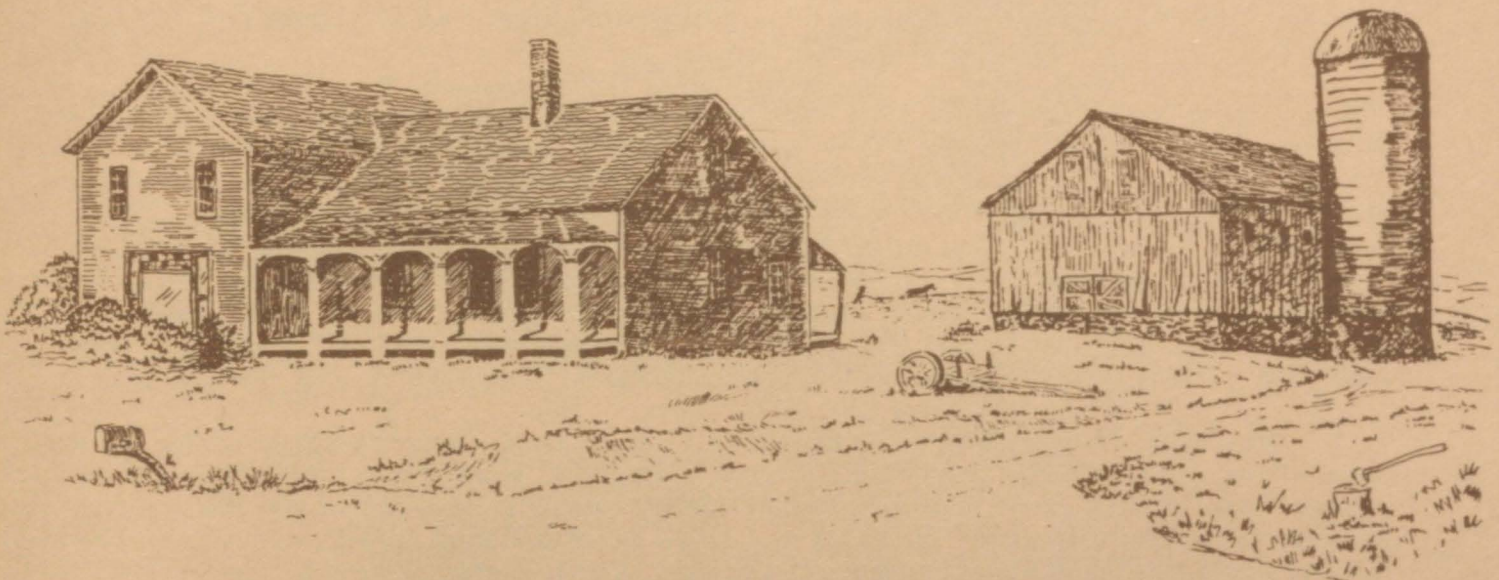
The Ifyu home, a two-story frame structure was located one mile west of Broadway in Merrillville on 73rd Avenue and is another of the many homes of Julius Demmon's descendants. Newton and Martha (Demmon) Burge resided in this house that was built on land that patriarch Julius purchased from John Merrill in 1865. (It is not known if the Merrills or the Burges were responsible for the construction.)

Newton and Martha lived in the house for a few years before moving to Wheeler, Indiana in 1883 where their six children were born. The Burge family returned to Ross Township in the early 1900s and the children married into pioneer families in the area and went their separate ways to other townships with their respective spouses.

In 1938 a Demmon descendant returned to the farm on 73rd Avenue. Leota, granddaughter of the Burges, and her husband, Laszlo Ifyu, bought the farm and over the next 12 years saw their children born on the ancestral homestead.

An unfortunate accident in 1951 claimed the life of Leota and Laszlo was left with their small children to mourn the loss of wife and mother. Laszlo took a second wife, Ellen Wood of Demotte, Indiana, who successfully fulfilled the need for a good wife and mother.

The Ifyu family has been living in the house for nearly forty years but sadly their occupancy will soon terminate. One can observe the demolition of the barn and out-buildings. Soon the house will be dismantled and in its stead might be a sleek, modern building, surrounded by asphalt parking lots with nary a trace of the century-old corn fields.



BURGE-IFYU FARMHOUSE AND BUILDINGS

STOLTZ GENERAL STORE

Shopping for groceries in a modern supermarket is a necessary but unwelcome chore that involves pushing a cart through long aisles of shelved foods, making your selections, standing in check-out lines and leaving with your purchases--seldom seeing an acquaintance. This experience seems so cold and sterile and devoid of all but the smallest aspects of human interaction.

This was not the case in the early 1900s. In those days stores were small and friendly and they were the center for the exchange of news and ideas. One establishment that was the embodiment of the traits of the small American retail business was the Stoltz General Store.

John and Margaret (Gerlach) Stoltz, in partnership with Carl Gerlach, built the store in 1905. The high, square building located at 50 West 73rd Avenue was constructed to be a combined home and store. Business was good but the operation was not profitable enough to support two families, so John and Margaret bought her brother out and continued the business on their own until John's death in 1945. Margaret then ran the store with the help of her daughter and son-in-law, Mabel and Joe Derrenbacker until 1950 at which time they sold it to Roy Bohne of Gary before moving to Florida.

Everyone enjoyed the warm atmosphere that permeated the Stoltz store. For many town folk it served various needs. Not only was it a place to buy necessities like axe handles, dried apples, lanterns, sugar, and dry goods, but it was also a place to pass the time of day, get advice for a problem, pick up some juicy gossip, obtain solace and commiseration for misfortunes, and to exchange farming tips and recipes. Many's the group of farmers who sat around the pot-bellied stove discussing the month's happenings and trading fish stories.

There was yet another social benefit to visiting the store--that of meeting young, unattached people. Several of Merrillville's old-timers met their future mates in the cozy surroundings of the store. "There wasn't too much else to do in those days, so we made excuses to go to the store where we could meet other young folks," explains Nancy Waltz. "That's where I met George. He asked me if he got a new car would I go for a ride with him. Shucks, he didn't have to buy a new car to take me out. I'd a gone anyhow."

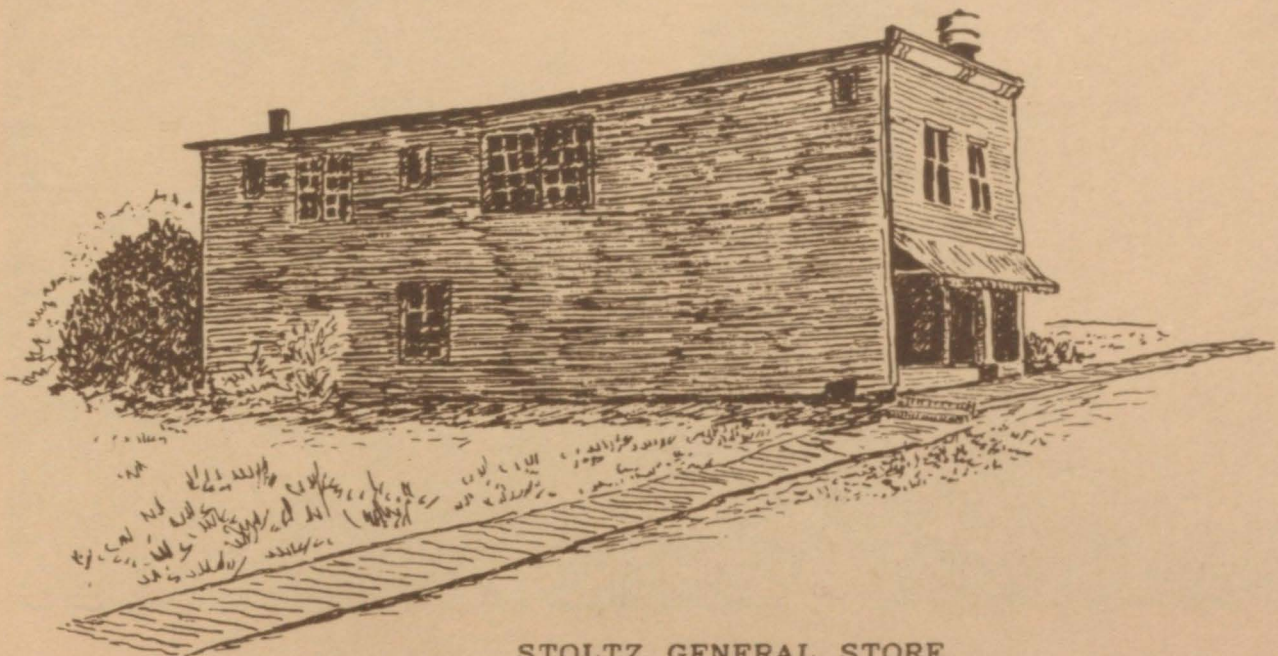
John Stoltz loved to while away the hours conversing with the farmers. In fact, his tendency to sit and chat would rancor Margaret, who, put out by his windy ways, would try to catch his eye and motion for him to quit gabbing. After a while, to avoid her disapproving stares, John developed the useful habit of looking at the ceiling when he talked.

The Stoltz store advertised fresh meat--a claim that was a bit of an understatement, for upon request for chicken, Margaret would go out back, kill a bird, come in carrying it with the blood still flowing from the headless fowl. On one occasion a customer good-naturedly inquired, "Are you sure it's fresh?" The fresh meat advertisement also included beef which Margaret butchered by herself in the rear of the shop.

The well known and well liked Stoltz family was honest and generous to a fault--to the point where they had to budget their finances carefully to make up for their help to others. During the Great Depression many families in this community would have gone hungry were it not for the Stoltzes' magnanimous ways. With no work or money in those difficult times, many people charged the food they got at the store. In time some were able to pay their bill, but others never could and the Stoltzes never pressed them for the money.

Gone now are the Stoltzes and their general store. Their tender-hearted policies might be regarded by some of today's entrepreneurs as naive and no way to make a profit yet it has earned the family the fond and respectful remembrance of their fellow townsmen.

The building still stands, though drastically remodeled. The facade has been altered; there's been an addition at the rear, and more modern windows have been installed. Owned and operated by Milo Vale, the building is currently used as offices for a dentist and real estate agents.



STOLTZ GENERAL STORE



Inside the Stoltz General Store



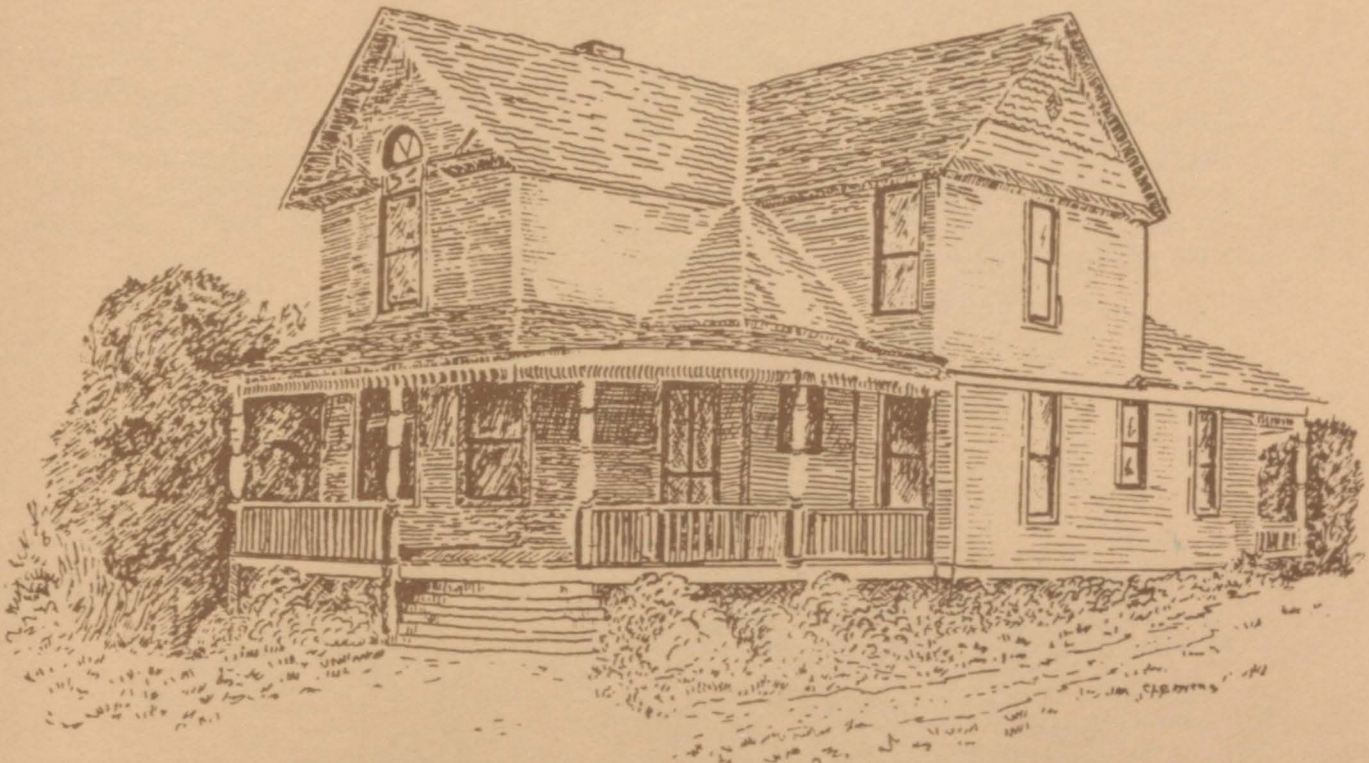
Margaret, John, and Mabel Stoltz

DAVID AND ALICE (DEMMON) OWEN HOME

The Owen home was an impressive ten room, two-story house built about 1889 on Cleveland Street, near the present Block House, in the area known as Lottaville. The four-gabled house had five rooms on each floor and the first floor boasted a grand entry way with a massive staircase.

Windmills pumped water into the second floor bathroom. A wide porch spanned the front and side of the house and a small porch marked the rear entrance. Multiple entrances gave access from various sides of the house. The cellar which was used for storage as well as storm protection. Beautifully polished floors and exquisite wood-work was found throughout. Mrs. Lucille Franz described it as "one of the best houses in the county."

David Owen was married to Alice (daughter of Julius Demmon) and they farmed the property for many years before moving to California. David was an energetic, thrifty farmer as his well-tilled fields demonstrated to all who could see. They sold the property to Michael Wehner who in turn sold it to Ed Krieter. When Ed moved out, the house stood vacant for several years and unfortunately fell prey to vandals, who caused so much damage that the fire department was forced to burn the building in 1973.



DAVID AND ALICE (DEMMON) OWEN FARMHOUSE

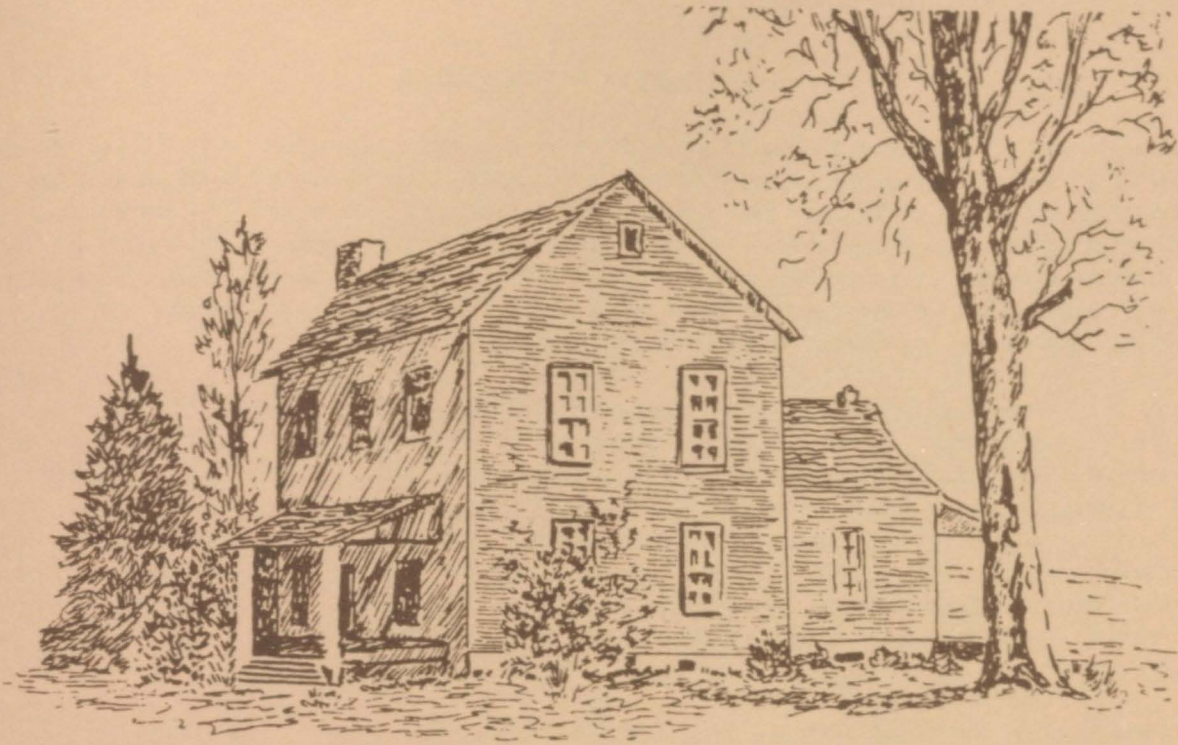
HOOLEY-DEMMON HOUSE

The Hooley-Demmon house was built by Thomas Hooley about 1877 and is acknowledged to be one of the oldest wood-frame dwellings in the area. The clapboards are weathered gray and the roof sags a bit under the weight of its years. About 15 yards to the right of the main house stands another house of similar style. These two separate dwellings were at one time the single home of Thomas and Ann Hooley.

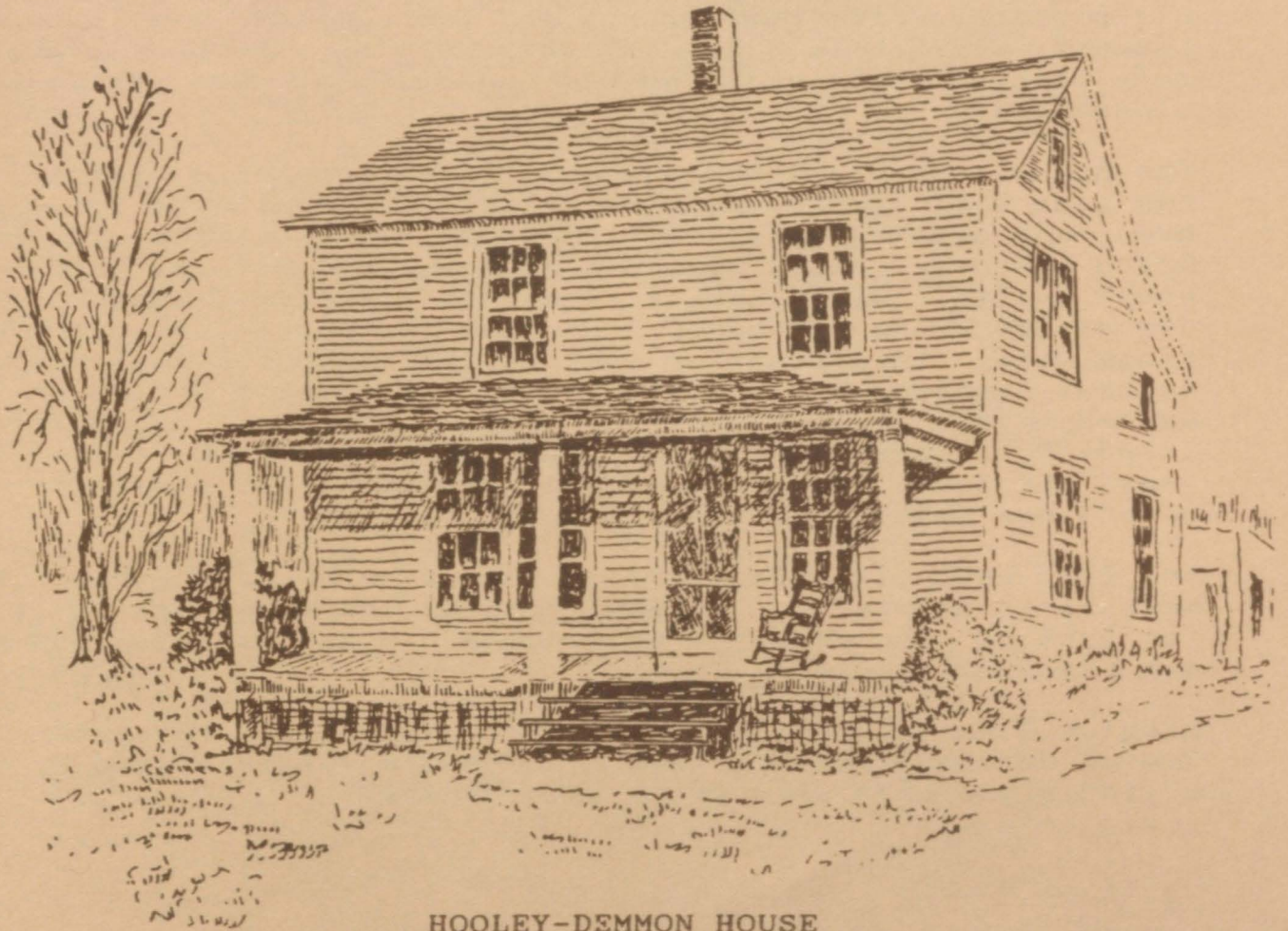
Ann, the daughter of Julius Demmon who inherited 160 acres from her father, and Thomas built the large seventeen room house to accommodate their family of six children as well as the hired help.

The property is located approximately three miles west of Broadway on 73rd Avenue and at one time was a very busy and successful dairy farm. The energetic and ambitious Thomas constantly improved the grounds and buildings, adding when necessary. In 1905 he built what was called the "finest barn in the area". The structure was 72 feet long and 52 feet wide and was compartmentalized to provide for a large grain bin and livestock stalls--eight for horses and thirty for cows.

Today the houses stand separated and forlorn--like two old ghosts of the past--as modern cars whiz by on the highway. They shelter renters now and even though children can be seen playing in the yard of the larger home, the atmosphere is such that an informed onlooker can glance at the property and visualize the buildings as a single home with the Hooley children going about their chores on the farm.



HOOLEY-DEMMON HOUSE
(Left side of original home)



HOOLEY-DEMMON HOUSE
(Right side of original home)

LENNERTZ HOMESTEAD

On the east side of Madison Street just south of 73rd Avenue you will see a large two-story frame house known as the old Lennertz place. This is the house where the history of the Lennertz family begins. Mathias Lennertz and his family were and have been identified with Ross Township since pioneer times, and their enterprise and hard work have been important factors in the growth of the community both then and now.

Mathias, who is still remembered for his honest and good-natured ways by old time Merrillville residents, had the distinction of being the longest established blacksmith in Ross Township. For nearly forty years he was the town "smithy", and later his son, Peter, operated both the shop and feed mill. The third generation of the Lennertz family to run the business was Charles Lennertz. Currently, he operates Lennertz Fireplace and Patio Shop at a different location.

Mathias' son, Fred, was a car dealer in this area for 44 years. He was co-founder of Walter and Lennertz Buick at County Road 330 (73rd Avenue) and Madison Street in 1923. After a few years, the partnership moved to a new location in the 6600 block of Broadway. James Lennertz and Kenneth Walter took over the business in 1950. Kenneth Walter sold his portion of the partnership and the company was known as Lennertz Oldsmobile. As of this writing, the business once more changed hands and operates under the name of Classic Oldsmobile.

The house on Madison Street, built over a hundred years ago, has been well preserved and cared for. Few alterations have been made outside other than the addition built at the rear which was used as a summer kitchen. When Mathias had the house built, comfort was foremost in his plans. Most of the downstairs rooms had doors that could be shut to keep certain rooms warm. This practice was typical in homes built before central heating was installed. The building's exterior is marked by two steep gables and a porch with bric-a-brac trim. Inside there are nine large, high-ceilinged rooms. Over the years the house has been changed to house two families--one up and one down.

Son Fred and his wife lived in the upstairs unit when they were first married. In 1925, Mathias had a cottage built on the back of the property to accommodate his daughter and her new husband.

Mathias died in 1939, and his wife, Barbara, (daughter of George Hoffman) died in 1942. The house was inherited by the children who then sold it in later years.



LENNERTZ HOUSE

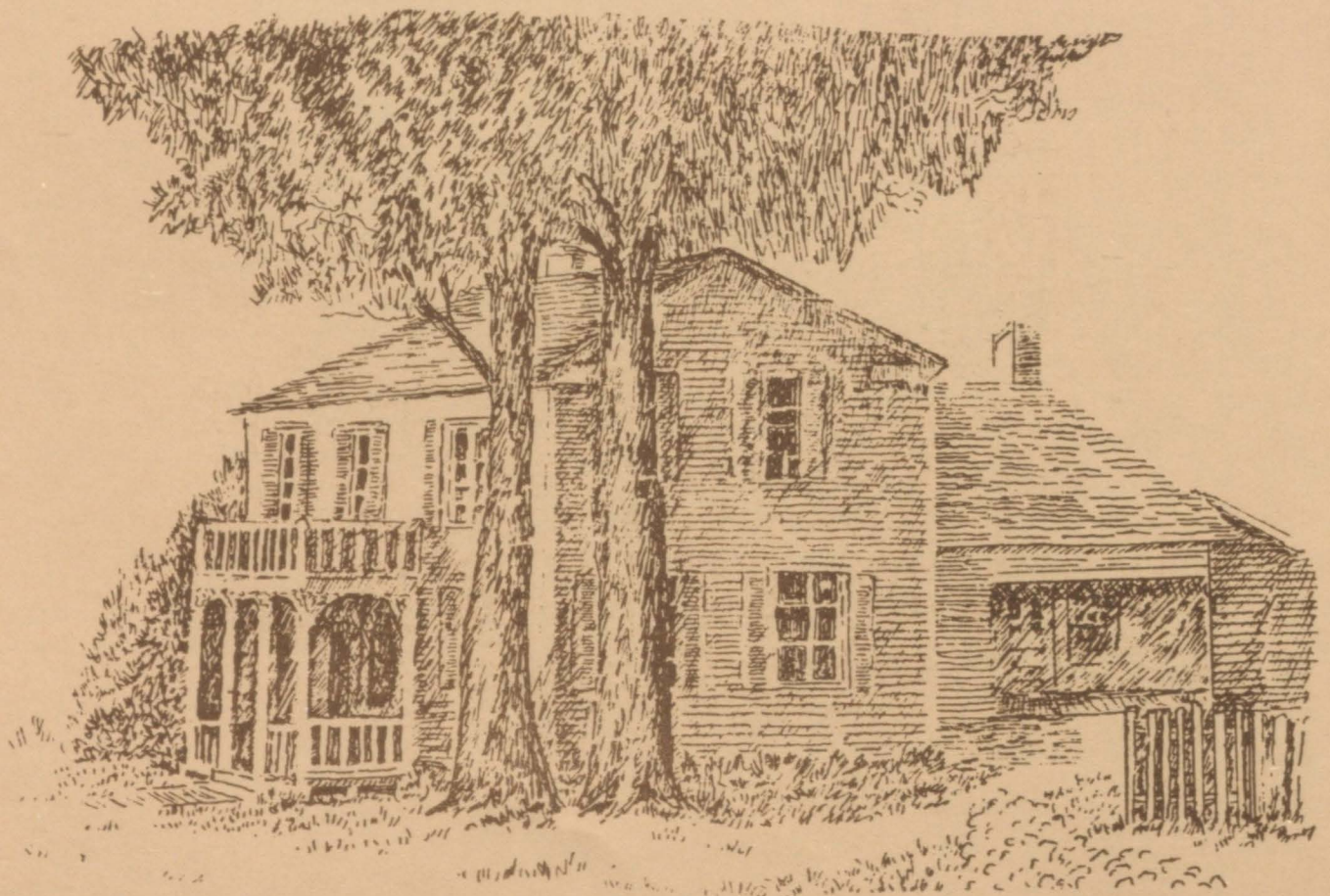
DUDLEY MERRILL HOME

It would be unthinkable to write any history of Merrillville, Indiana, without mentioning the Merrill brothers--who arrived here when the area was called Centerville--and for whom the town was eventually renamed.

Dudley and William Merrill were successful businessmen of marked ability and energy who helped shape the development of this community. Their endeavors contributed to a foundation for growth that still sustains the town more than one hundred years later. What follows is a brief sketch of Dudley's activities, that due to space limitations, simply cannot do him justice.

When Dudley arrived in the area, it was little more than an encampment on an old Indian Trail. At first, Dudley chose to settle at Deep River but later moved on to Wiggins Point as this area was then known. The Old Sauk Trail was earmarked for a stagecoach route from Fort Dearborn (in Michigan) to Joliet, Illinois and passed right through Wiggins Point.

Recognizing the value of holding property along the trail, Dudley purchased some of the land, subdivided it, sold it at a profit and re-invested in more land. On some of the land he built a cheese factory which later was known as Merrill Hall.



DUDLEY MERRILL HOME

He also built a general merchandise store next to the Old California Hotel. The store was a long, narrow, two-story structure with the usual square front. Double doors opened onto a two foot high boardwalk. Such high boardwalks were necessary because the roadways were muddy and the nearby creek had an uncooperative habit of overflowing its banks and lapping at the front doors of the store.

A man by the name of Sam Straight was Dudley's partner for a while until Dudley sold his share to a Mrs. Hale. Still later, Dudley bought the store back and his two sons, Oliver and John, clerked for him. When John married, he acquired ownership and ran the business for many years. The store burned sometime in the 1890s.

Dudley was responsible for the construction of several other structures, among them his own two-story clapboard frame dwelling located at 12 West 73rd Avenue. Grecian in style, the house had large entablatures, narrow windows, a small porch, and well defined pediments at the gable ends of the building.

The house has undergone many changes since Dudley first built it in 1847. The original clapboards were removed and covered with asbestos siding and, like most old homes, the front porch was enclosed. In 1951, a two-story addition was built at the rear of the house.

It is not known when or if Dudley moved from the house. He may have remained there until his death. His son, Charles Merrill, lived in it for a while. The house changed hands several times until about 1900 when Walter Demmon purchased the home. He rented it to George and Nellie (Guernsey) Demmon and their six children, Ella, Earl, Irene, Martha, Clarence, and Arthur were born in the house. At this writing, all but Irene still live in Merrillville.

The house has been in the Demmon family for three generations and the present owners are Thomas and Jean Yaros. Mrs. Yaros is a granddaughter of Walter Demmon.

HURLBURT HOMESTEAD

Traveling along Randolph Road, about a mile and a half south of Highway 30, this author came across an attractive, well-cared for brick farmhouse. The immediate impression was one of tranquility and dignity. In basic form the house is very similar to other Ross Township farm homes yet, on closer examination, one sees that it has a distinctive Italianate design that sets it apart from the others. The features that are characteristic of that style--posts, brackets under the eaves, wide entablatures, and tall windows--are combined in a manner that exhibits class.

The one-storied entrance porch with its slender square posts exudes an air of simple dignity. The bay window, the curved windows, and the eaves brackets contribute to the stately atmosphere of the building. The house is set on a slope and is shaded by large old trees that provide a framework for the open fields beyond. One can almost sense the nostalgia for the uncomplicated days of yesterday.

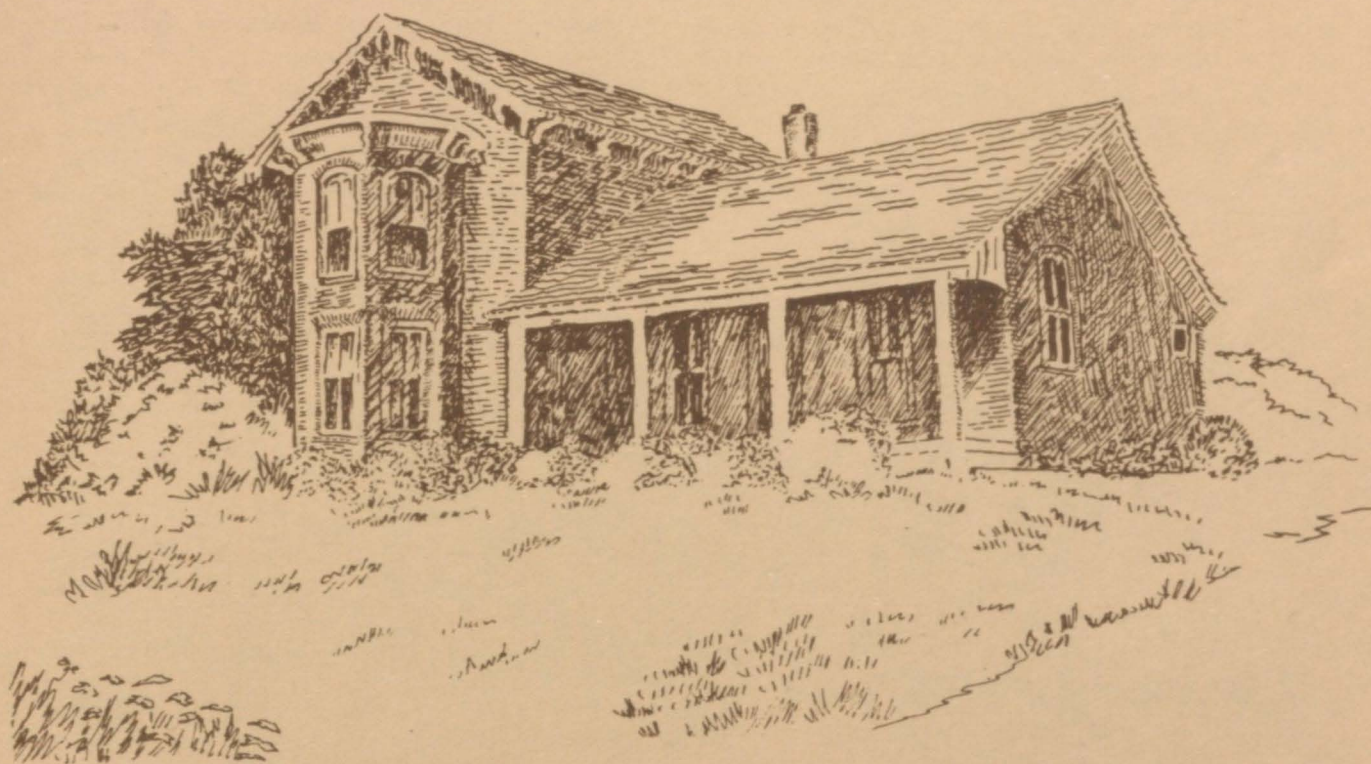
The architect and builder of this gracious dwelling was Milan Hurlburt who built it in 1865. Milan was the son of Jacob Hurlburt, a big, brawny man, who lived by his wits and who came to Lake County in 1834. Jacob spent his time hunting and trapping, the whole while learning the geography of the area. This experience earned him the job of guiding and working with the U. S. Surveyors in Crown Point, Indiana. He also served as a guide for many early pioneers including Solon Robinson and his group.

Jacob and Susan (his young bride of sixteen) settled in Ross Township on a claim near what would be later called Hurlburt Corners. A part of their property was used for a one-room schoolhouse known as Hurlburt School. George Boyd was one of its teachers and the Guernsey children (Melvin, Clarence, Ray, and Hazzard), the Young children (Harry, Delbert, and Vern), and the two Hurlburt youngsters, (Ethel and Chester), as well as Pearl Wert were among the students who attended. The Hurlburts lived in a log cabin for many years until a more comfortable home was built. Unfortunately, we do not have a picture of Jacob's and Susan's home.

With all his activity, Jacob still devoted a lot of time to farming as well as civic affairs. In both enterprises he was extremely competent and all his undertakings met with great success. His contemporaries regarded Jacob with great awe and respect.

One example is illustrated by the story of how he took his grain to Woods Mill in Deep River for grinding into flour and while the grain was being processed, he would sit and talk to many of his neighbors. On one such occasion, the discussion was interrupted by a small band of Indians knocking on the door seeking a handout. The Indians, denied their request and encouraged to leave, became very adamant in their demands and threatened damage to the mill. Their bravado quickly turned to timidity when the burly looking, three hundred pound, heavily bearded Jacob Hurlburt stood up and loomed ominously at the door. Needless to say, the Indians retreated without further incident.

After Jacob retired from farming, he moved in with his son, Milan and Milan's wife, Sarah. Milan and his family lived in the house for many years with Jacob. Eventually the house was sold outside the family.



HURLBURT FARMHOUSE

WALTER HOME

The Walter house on Madison Street, though not one of the oldest in Merrillville, is of considerable interest because it was the home of Ernest "Cheese Henry" Walter, who played a substantial role in the development of the community.

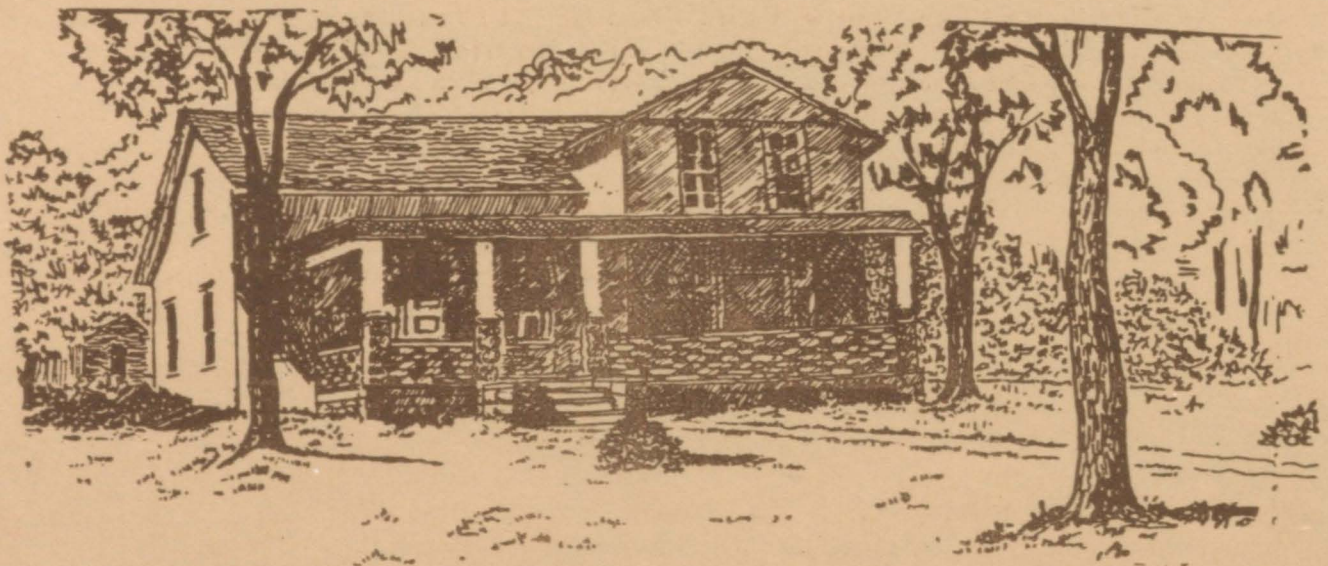
The residence is set back from the road under the shade of large oak trees and is quite unlike neighboring homes. Built in 1900, the two and a half-story stucco building features a second floor gable facing the street. The porch has a hip roof and the porch railing boasts an alternating block trim.

Ernest Walter, a native of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, married Louise Niksch and they had three sons. Early in his successful career he established cheese factories in Merrillville as well as in Deep River providing many in the area with his delicious cheeses.

Ernest was also named Town Assessor and became a real estate developer when he partitioned a tract of his land into several lots and named the street that provided access to these lots, Walter's Avenue.

In 1929, Ernest died and his widow, Louise, moved into an apartment above Walter's Buick Garage, and son Howard and his wife (Clara Gerlach) took possession of the house. For about 38 years the house was occupied by renters before it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. C. Sutton.

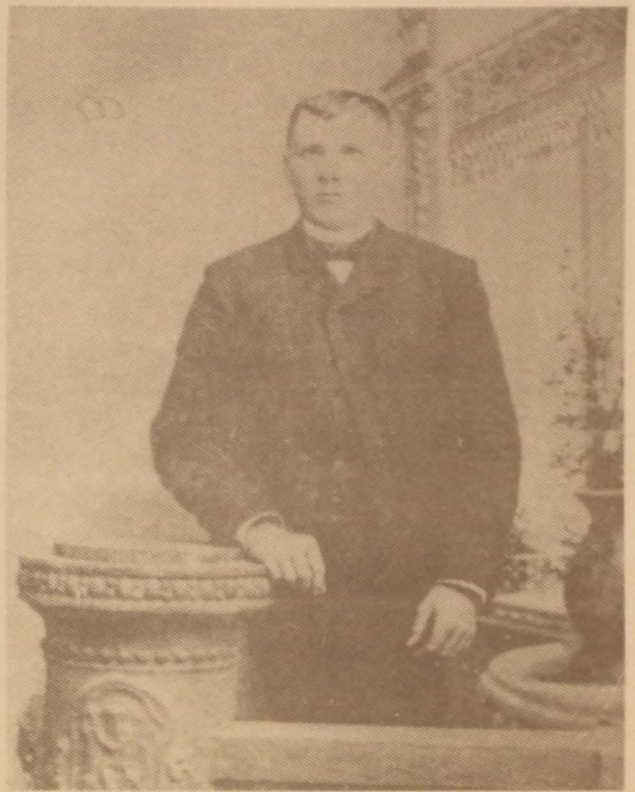
"Cheese Henry" and his flavorful cheeses are remembered by many of the old-time residents.



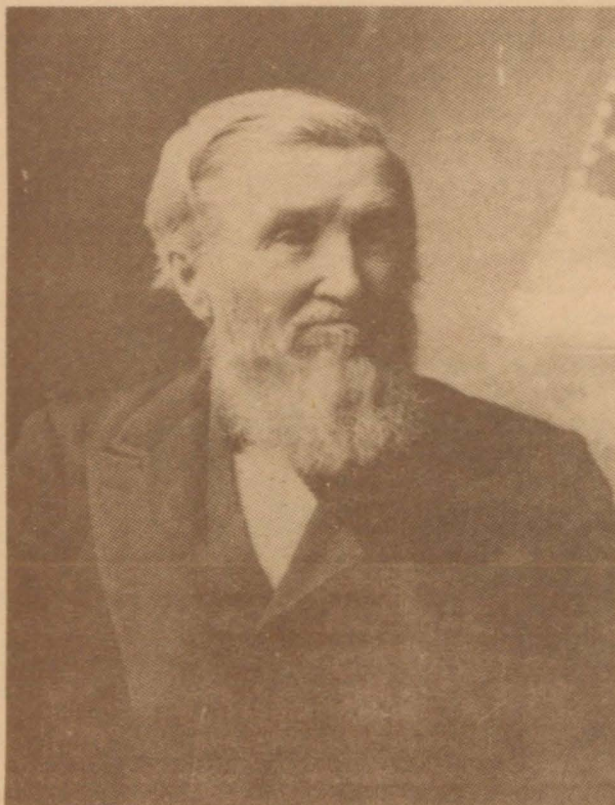
ERNEST WALTER HOME



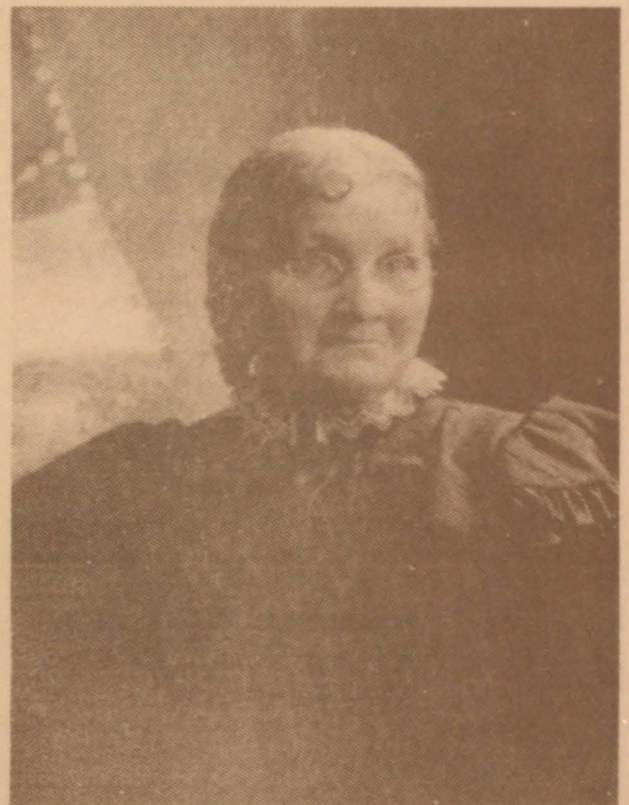
Ernest "Cheese Henry" Walter
and son, Walter



Mathias Neudorf



Bartlett Woods
"The Grand Ole Man"



Mrs. Bartlett Woods

HICKORY RIDGE FARM

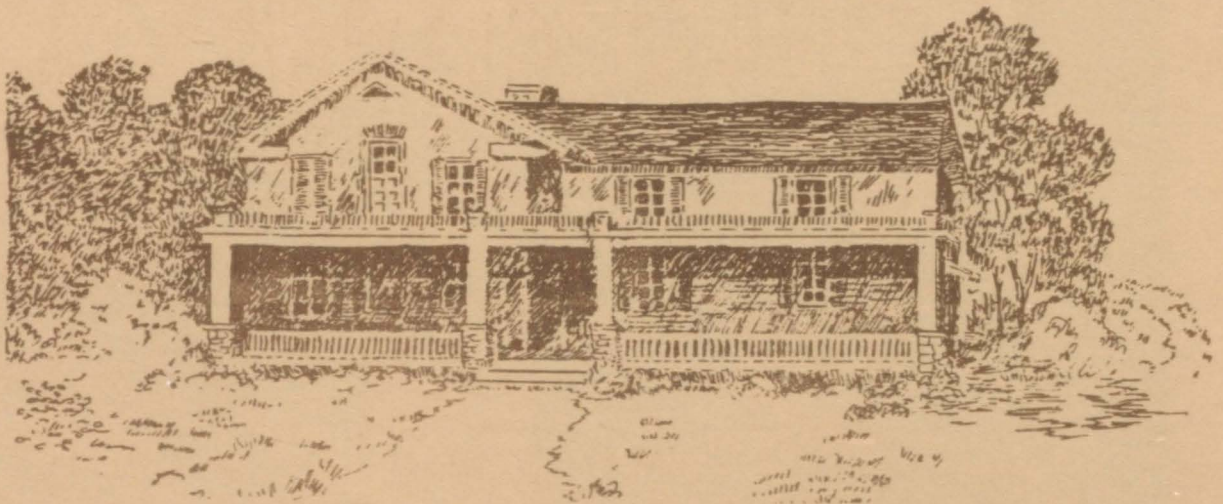
There was nothing remarkable about the two-story old house that was located on West 57th Avenue, near the intersection of 57th and Cleveland Street (Route 55). The house was very similar to others in many small towns across America. But this one was special because it was the home of Bartlett Woods, known as the "Grand Ole Man of Lake County".

Bartlett, a native of England, was one of the very earliest settlers in the area, arriving in 1837, the same year the county was formed. A log cabin sheltered the family until the land could be cleared and the two-story home built. The simple Greek Revival style home had little in the way of ornamentation but it was a functional and comfortable home. The nine rooms featured a living room with fireplace, oak floors and oak woodwork. The original front porch was small and was soon replaced with one that spanned the entire front.

Mr. Woods, a noted public figure, was active in the anti-slavery movement, the founder of the local Republican party, served as a State Representative, was an accomplished newspaper writer, and was considered to be a deep thinker.

His estate was known in the area as Hickory Ridge Farm and was a leading dairy farm in the township. Farming was secondary; his major pursuits were those activities that made him one of the most prominent leaders in all of Lake County.

Four generations of the Woods family lived in the house at one time or another and the last descendant generously offered the house as a museum show place. Sadly, this offer was lost to the town because funds were not available to restore the house. In 1956, the Fire Department had to burn the house for safety reasons. All that remains today as a tribute to the "Grand Ole Man" is a small historical marker.



BARTLETT WOODS HOMESTEAD

MERRILL-PIERCE-NEUDORF-LOYCE HOME

By the spring of 1870, the town of Merrillville had become an active and well-established settlement, emulating the mellowness and settled ways of older towns. Large oak trees stood on either side of hilly Joliet Road (73rd Avenue) which was deep-rutted from the passage of heavy wheels in the previous winter's mud. Behind the trees were recently built homes as well as some stores and a few vacant lots were scattered here and there. One of the fanciest homes built in 1870 belonged to John Merrill.

The spacious ten room dwelling was L-shaped with a projection toward the street and featured a good sized porch in the angle. Unadorned windows and plain wall surfaces lent, by contrast, more emphasis to the double porch railings and the ornamental woodwork above the columns. This stylish house was befitting to the prominent men who lived in it.

John Merrill, builder of the house, was the son of one of the town fathers, Dudley Merrill. After serving as a first lieutenant in the Civil War, John returned home and opened a general merchandise store and built himself a reputation as an able businessman like his father before him. He also was the Stage Proprietor, a Town Trustee, and County Treasurer.

In the mid 1880s, John Merrill moved to Crown Point, Indiana, and sold his home to Marion Pierce. Like Merrill, Pierce was a prominent businessman. This top-ranking merchant found time to serve as Trustee, Postmaster, and Internal Revenue Officer. Mr. Pierce married Margaret Randolph who was a sister to John Merrill's wife. Both weddings, Pierce-Randolph and Merrill-Randolph, took place in 1867.

In 1910, Mathias Neudorf who operated the coal business in Merrillville, bought the Pierce home. Mathias was a widower who had married Mary Loyce from Chicago, and became a step-father to her two sons, Ray and Ralph Loyce.

A small office was added to the west side of the house for Mathias' business transactions. In those days, when coal was the primary fuel for homes, almost everyone picked up their coal at the shed near the train station and carried it to the scale beside the Neudorf home to be weighed.

Ralph Loyce bought into the business in 1935 and eventually bought Matt out. In 1959, when the availability of electricity and gas made the coal business almost obsolete, Ralph closed his business because of a lack of customers. Thus, the coal business followed the fate of the ice business.

After living in it for 52 years, Ralph sold the house in 1963.



THE LOYCE FAMILY



THE PIERCE FAMILY

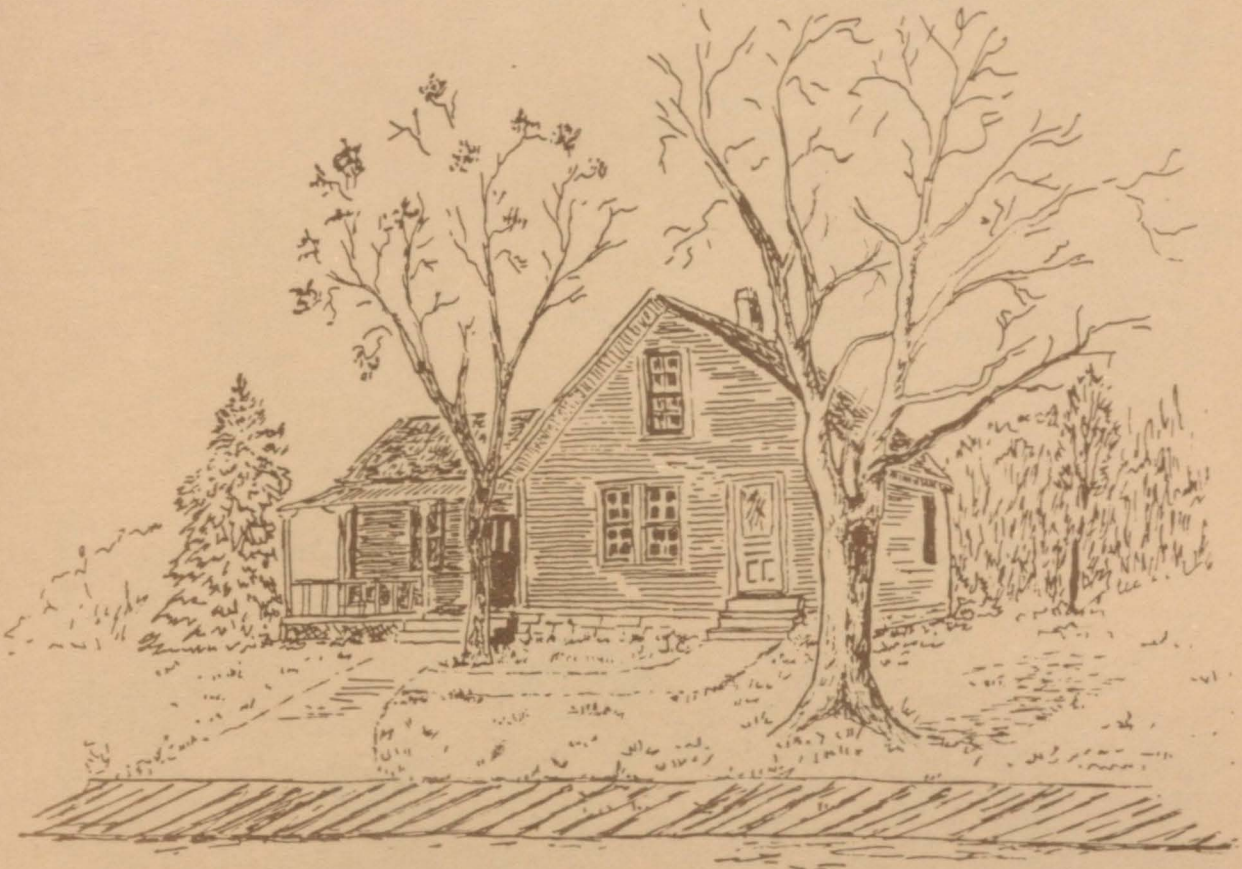
The hired girl ? Richardson; daughter, Cora; wife Margaret,
son Ralph, Marion Pierce, and son Floyd

SAXTON-KOCH HOUSE

One of the most unpretentious old dwellings in Merrillville is the small story and a half cottage located on the east side of Madison Street, north of the C & O Railroad tracks. Many will view it as an unappreciated, ordinary building but it gave shelter to several early settlers of the area.

The L-shaped house, with a porch in the angle, (a common building form throughout this area) is situated on land that was once a part of the 80 acre farm belonging first to Myiel Pierce and then to Dudley Merrill. The land was divided each time it was sold until finally in 1863, Alvin and Lucinda Green purchased 6 1/2 acres of the original 80 and built a home which they occupied for eleven years. Ebenezer and Minerva Saxton bought the dwelling from the Greens in 1874.

Ebenezer Saxton migrated from Canada to Ross Township with his wife and six children in a covered wagon, bouncing through the woodlands and rolling over the prairies, all the way fighting the muddy roads. They brought family treasures and furniture as well as necessary farm implements, some of which had to be discarded along the way to keep the wagon from bogging down in the mire.



SAXTON-KOCH HOUSE

Arriving at Wiggins Point (now Merrillville) in 1837, the Saxtons took up residence in a cabin belonging to Jeremiah Wiggins. They lived there for many years and two more children were born to them. Ebenezer farmed the land for 37 years and retired in 1874. At that time he purchased the little house on Madison Street from Alvin Green and he and his wife, Minerva, lived there until 1877 when Ebenezer died. Their daughter, Betsy, and her husband John Frazier, moved in with Minerva and upon her death in 1879, the house was sold to Edward and Barbara Koch.

Edward Koch was born in Germany and at age 18 emigrated to America and settled in Ross Township in 1875. In 1878 he married Barbara Hoffman, daughter of Thomas Hoffman. The following year they purchased the Saxton cottage where several of their children were born. Edward worked as a farm laborer, saved a sum of money each year, and accumulated a sufficient amount to purchase a farm of his own. After selling the property to Ernest Walter in 1887, the Kochs moved to their new farm on West 73rd Avenue.

At the turn of the century, the house became the property of Alvah and Jennie Saxton. Alvah, a grandson of Ebenezer and Minerva Saxton, occupied the house until 1924 when Alvah moved his family to a new home on Broadway.

The house was rented until 1935 by son Herbert Saxton who married Nora Edna (Pierce) and whose two daughters, Edith (Saxton) Flora and Geneva (Saxton) Eberhardt still live in the area.

Ted Houchin, a former Ross Township Trustee and a County Truant Officer, bought the house in 1935 and remodeled it both inside and out during the next 25 years.



Front Row: Mr. & Mrs. Alvah Saxton
holding Geneva (Saxton) Eberhardt
Back Row: Nora (Pierce) Saxton, Erma Saxton,
Edna (Saxton) Boyd, and Charles Boyd



WEDDING PICTURE OF
HERBERT AND NORA (PIERCE) SAXTON



Mr. and Mrs. Alvah Saxton



Nora (Pierce) Saxton in 1890
Age six

THE OLD CHEESE FACTORY

Ernest Walter built this factory in 1880 for the purpose of housing his magical operation of turning ordinary, health-giving milk into a savory solid that was capable of adding substance and flavor to sandwiches, enhancing the taste of wine and topping apple pie.

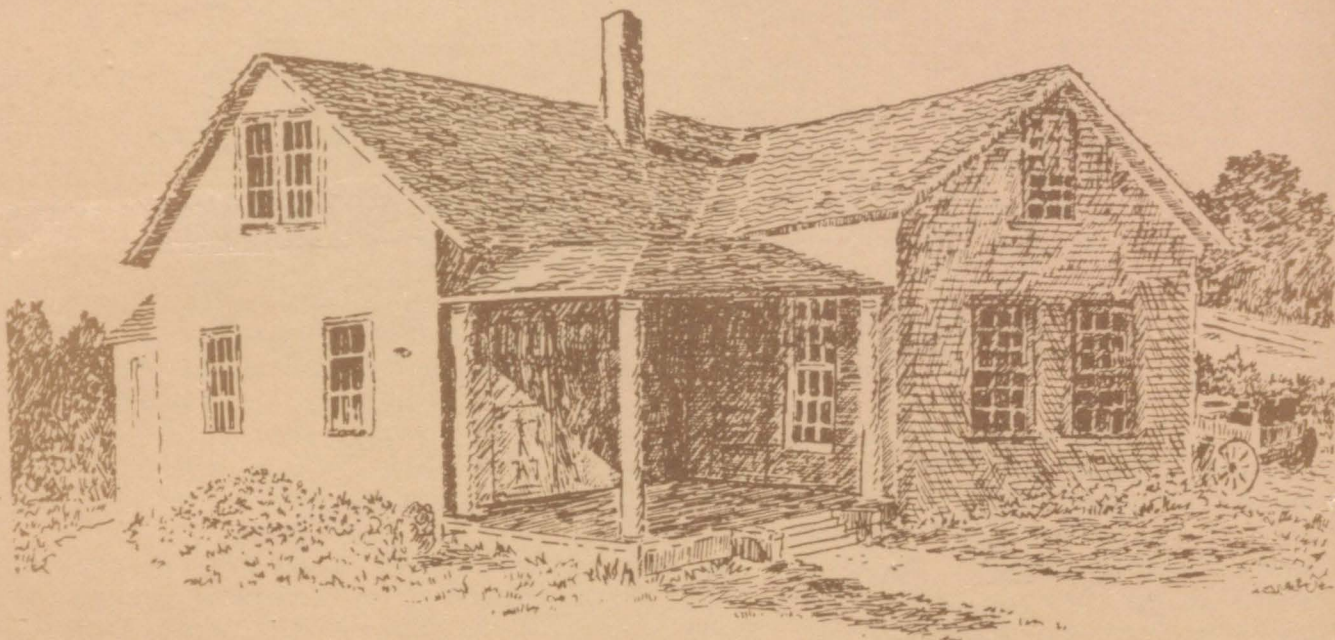
Initially Ernest had a factory on Walter's Avenue but later relocated to the southwest side of the C. & O. Railroad on Madison Street in closer proximity to the Township's busy square. His business was not limited to local patronage, however. Ernest traveled as far as Hammond, Indiana, in his horse and buggy to peddle his hefty rolls of cheese for \$3.00 apiece.

Known far and wide by his nickname, "Cheese Henry", Ernest was much appreciated by the local farmers as they found in his business a market for their slightly soured milk that was not was not suitable for shipping to Chicago on the "dummy" train. The fact that the milk was on the verge of curdling was certainly no hindrance to the cheese making process.

Ernest's goodies, besides being found in country kitchens, were also featured at the local taverns. In those days the tavern owners furnished free food to their liquor drinking customers.

The cheese factory was later turned into living quarters after Ernest retired. Though it looks small, it contains nine rooms and is still much the same as it was when built except that the north doorway has been eliminated. This is where the milk was unloaded and the finished product, cheese, was put on wagons for distribution.

There have been several owners of the house including John Zeimet, a widower, who sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Henry (Mary Popp) Vonderheid who lived in the house for 70 years. Four of their children were born in the house. Currently the house is owned by Mrs. Marge Kross.



WALTER'S CHEESE FACTORY
CIRCA 1880

MERRILLVILLE TRAIN STATION

Shortly after the first steam engines were built in 1830, a web of railroad routes began to spread throughout the country. Gradually, stations were established in towns on the periphery of Ross Township, but it was not until 1876 that the railroad came to and through Merrillville, Indiana.

Railroads offered people an opportunity to travel farther, faster, facilitated communication between widely separated areas, and allowed producers to expand the range of their markets. No list of superlatives, no matter how extensive, can adequately convey the impact the railroads have had on the growth and development of the country in general and of our area in particular.

Soon after the railroad was established here, the federal government made an attractive offer of cheap travel rates for immigrants and that precipitated a tremendous influx of people in this town and other areas.

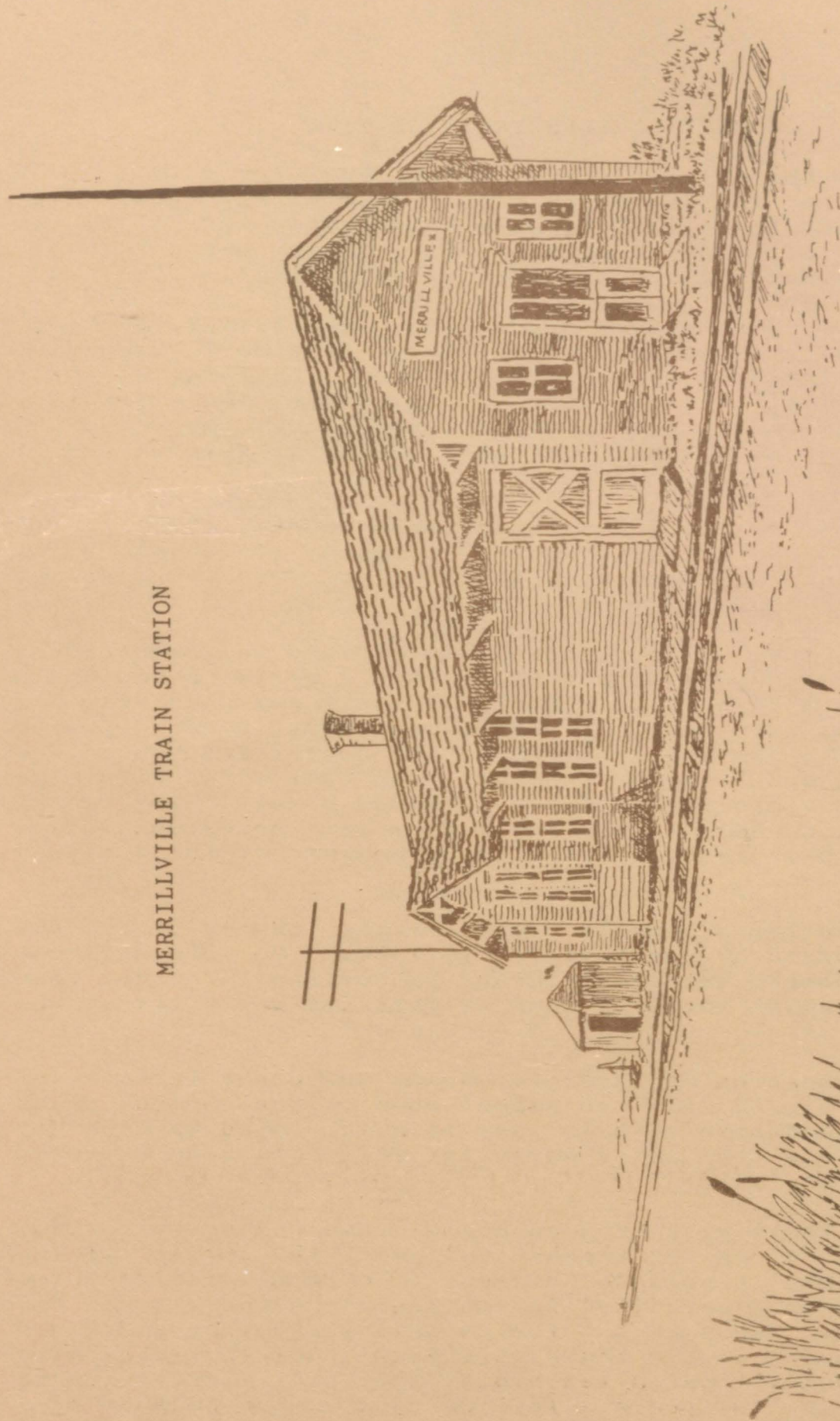
Free land in the western states was offered to homesteaders and, with the low rate of traveling on a train, a man could commandeer an entire box car for himself and his family, loading it up with furniture, farm equipment, food, supplies and livestock. The family lived in the boxcar and tended the animals until such time as the car was set off on a side track in the vicinity of their intended home. Many young people who lived here in the early days were homesteaders who traveled in this fashion, including members of the Guernsey family.

The C. & O. Railroad came to Merrillville in 1876 and the Chicago and Grand Trunk followed in 1880. The Grand Trunk had station houses in Ainsworth and Lottaville. The day when Merrillville would require such a facility was still in the future.

Under the persuasion of Bartlett Woods and other influential townspeople, a milk run was established on the Grand Trunk that started modestly with 16 cans of milk picked up each day and escalated to the point where two full cars were required to carry all the milk.

Farmers took their milk cans on horse-drawn wagons to various pick-up points along the tracks to await the arrival of the so called "dummy" trains to Chicago. Though not designed for passenger comfort, Merrillville residents often rode the "dummy" to the Windy City for a day of shopping and would return that night on the train bringing back the empty milk cans. The "dummy" trains faithfully made their daily round trip for nearly 40 years, failing just once because of a snowdrift in Lottaville.

MERRILLVILLE TRAIN STATION



Handwritten text, likely a description or note related to the station, written in cursive script.

Passenger service finally came to Merrillville after 1900 on the B & O and with it came the need for a station house. In 1903, the station house was erected on the north side of the tracks near the corner of 73rd and Broadway. The station was comprised of a ticket office, a waiting area, and a four room apartment where the ticket agent lived with his family.

Benjamin Reder was one of several agents who lived in the house over the years. His son, Howard, (who with his son, John, returned to this area in 1968 after a long absence) recalls his childhood days in the station house and chuckles as he remembers how guests would complain of being unable to sleep when they visited the Reder family. Unfazed by the noisy trains, the Reder family would sleep peacefully while their guests would toss fitfully or sit bolt upright when a locomotive, with whistle screaming, thundered into the station drawing its caravan of rattling cars behind it.

Passenger trains meant much more than convenient travel for Merrillville residents. The trains spelled adventure to those who could not afford the expense of journeys to far away cities; talking to returning passengers was an enriching and educational experience. It was not uncommon for many people in town to turn out for the arrival of the Sunday train and greet the passengers as if the mystique of their experiences could be magically imparted to the bystanders simply through the act of waving.

Like everything else, there were great changes in the history of the railroads. Fewer passengers traveled on the trains after mass production of the automobile made it possible for more families to purchase a car. Most railroads were making more money on their freight trains than on their passenger trains, and found they could not continue to service small towns. Among the small towns which lost their passenger service was Merrillville and in 1946 Harlan Cain, the last ticket agent in this area, along with many Merrillville residents, watched as the last passenger train pulled out.

In the late 1960s, the train station was donated to the Ross Township Historical Society. They had hoped to use the 64 year old building as a museum in Ross Township but, due to financial difficulties, this plan was not realized and the building was later removed.

LADIES AID SOCIETY

One of the most interesting historical buildings in old time Merrillville was the structure known as Merrill Hall. Built in 1855 by Dudley Merrill, it was meant to be used as a cheese factory. The long, one-story building had no windows on the sides and only one window on either side of the front door which was approached by wooden steps. Unfortunately, we do not have a picture of this building and it no longer exists.

Though not designed to be a meeting place, it became just that when Charles Merrill donated the Hall and its narrow lot to the Church for the express purpose of housing the Ladies Aid Society or as it was called in later years, The Women's Society of the Christian Church.

The organization was established with the goal of helping to raise funds for the community's First Methodist Church. The objectives became broader in reality as the Society became a wide-spectrum charitable organization with activities ranging from visiting the sick to sponsoring young people's social gatherings. Thus, the group was an asset to the community in more ways than in financing the Church. It was an instrument whereby the women could pool their efforts and energies to improve the quality of community life. A list of some of their activities included:

Chicken suppers: Year ago, the ladies fried chicken on a kerosene stove and placed an oven on top of the stove to bake chicken pies.

Bazaars: The ladies made hand towels, pot-holders, shade-pulls, toys, etc. and sold them on special occasions.

Sewing Circle: Committees made quilts to sell.

Bake Sales: Mrs. Lillian Pierce, who lived across the street, would receive all the pies and baked goods sent to her via the school bus and she would take them to the Hall for the sale.

Aiding the sick: Many of the members were always ready to help the sick and their families.

Activities: Sponsored 8th grade graduation exercises including serving the refreshments, helping with the entertainment, and intermingling with family and friends.

The Society also made the Hall available for community held elections.

Some of the women who contributed to the Society are listed here:

Mrs. Louise Merrill gave generously of her time to both the Society and the Church. The Merrill family donated the Hall and gave a large amount of time and effort to the group.

Edna Saxton was a diligent and devoted member for 20 years.

Alice (Coffee) Pierce was the church organist and secretary. She also served as Society president for 15 years.

Mrs. Severance served as president.

Mrs. Henry Kuehl (and her husband) devoted much time to the Society.

Mrs. Nettie Niksch, Mrs. Marion Pierce, Mrs. Seymour Wayman, Mrs. Homer Iddings, Mrs. Caroline Randolph, Mrs. Silas Zuvers, and Miss Angie Glazier were some of the women who served on the committee that administered assistance at the time of sickness and death. Most often a floral offering was sent to the families who suffered the loss of a loved one.

These hard working women, and many more not mentioned, who lent their energies to good works and to supporting their church were motivated by strong religious convictions. As Mrs. Edith Hire put it, "God sat in the middle of the group."

The accompanying illustration gives one an idea of the Hall and the photograph (taken in 1914) pictures many of the Society members. The house in the background belonged to William G. Woods who was among the few men who belonged to the Society.

Pictured are: (not in order)

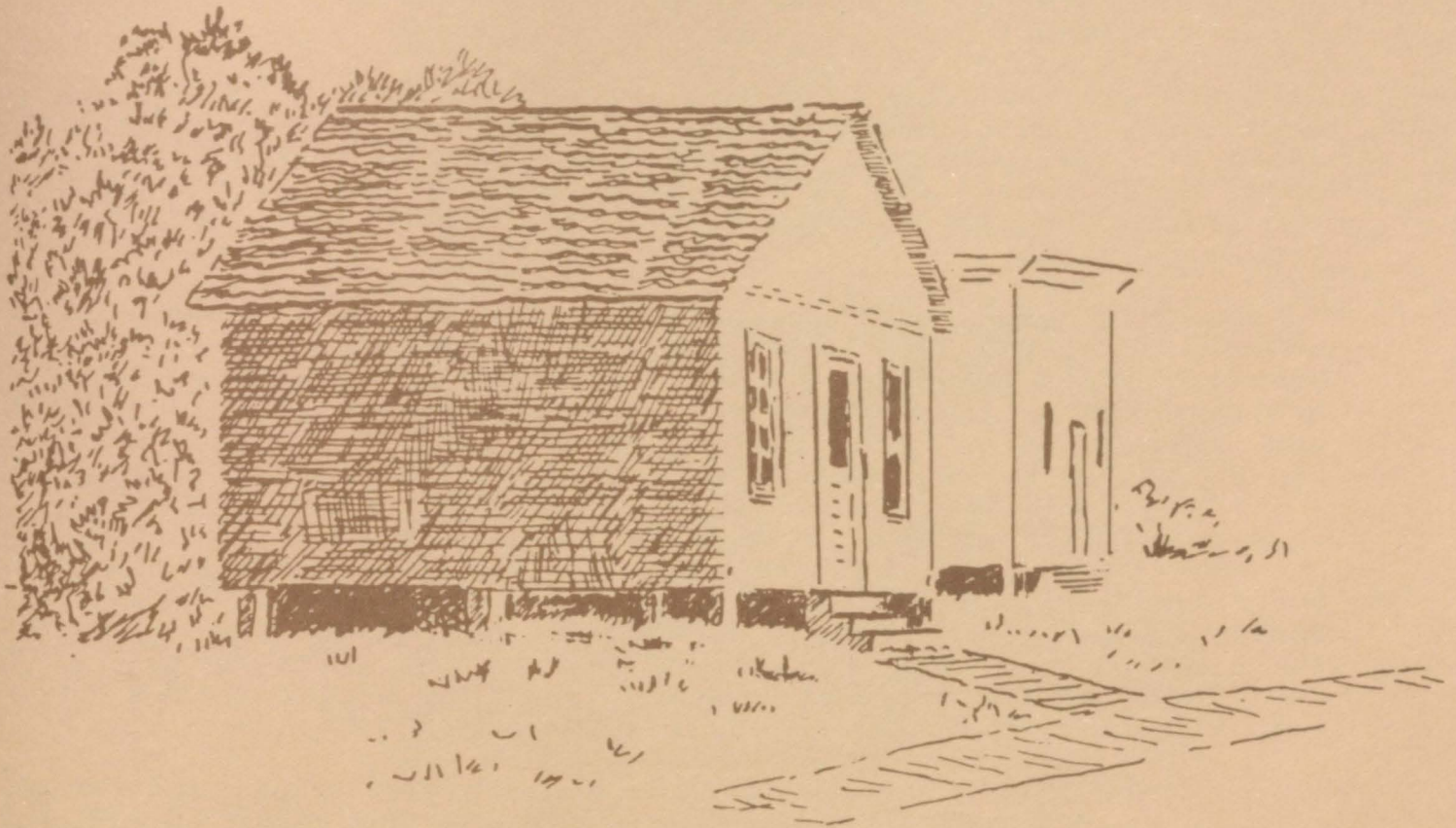
Mrs. Fred Ewing, Mrs. Eleanor Woods, Ruth, Wilbur, and Bartlett Woods, Mrs. Henry Kuehl and her children: Blanche, Lillian, and Mildred, Irma Sader and daughter, Mabel, Carrie Douglas, Mrs. Mae Pierce and Marian.

Also, Mrs. Harper, Mrs. Wayman, Mrs. Sam Woods, Mrs. Will Woods, Mrs. Gebhart, Mrs. Will Smith, Mrs. Scott Burge, Mrs. Caroline Randolph, Mrs. Louise Walters, and Mr. Will Smith.

Also, Mrs. Lydia Zuvers, Ella Arnold, Jennie Saxton, Belle Blachly, Mary Muzzall, Lillian Pierce, Alice Pierce, Eva Blachly, Carrie Phillips, Mary Demmon, Harry Woods, Lydia Loyce, Myiel Pierce, Mrs. Mau, Min Loyce, Will Woods, Lucinda Goodrich, and Carrie Goodrich.

LADIES AID SOCIETY
1914





MERRILL HALL AND LADIES AID SOCIETY

SCHILLO HOMESTEAD

The Schillo clan is yet another one of those German families who have been prominent factors in the agricultural development of the area. Out of a wilderness they established grain and dairy farms which later contributed substantially to the growing community.

John Schillo was born in Trier, Germany in 1826. He came to this country with his brothers and sisters and their Uncle Jacob along with several other German families in 1843. This large group left their native home because they were afraid the German government would recruit their minor children into the German Army.

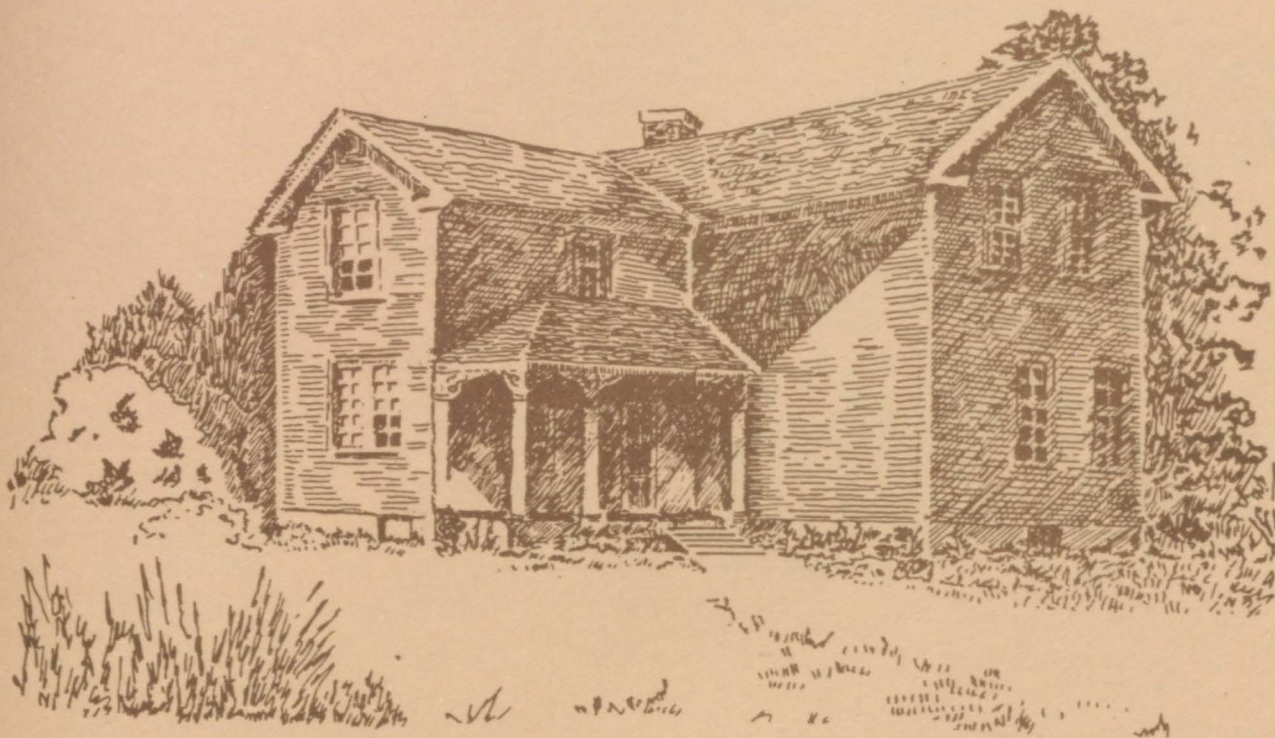
In New York, each family purchased a covered wagon, food, and other necessary items, and traveled together across the country. Many settled in Lake County, Indiana. The older brothers and sisters in the Schillo family pooled their money and, together with their Uncle Jacob, purchased a farm near the Hobart line where they lived until each married.

John was only 15 years old when he arrived in Ross Township but when he turned 23, he married and moved to his newly purchased farm consisting of 80 acres in Turkey Creek, a mostly German settlement. He built a good-sized log cabin where majority of his children were born. With dedicated perseverance he saved enough money and was able to purchase land that enlarged his farm to 163 acres.

At first all farm work was done by hand, tying oats and hay with twine, pushing a one-horse plow across the dusty fields, and dropping seeds in handmade dirt hills. Eventually John purchased a big threshing machine as well as various other pieces of more modern equipment.

Hard work, determination, and thriftiness finally enabled John to finance the two-story frame house that still stands today on the south side of the Grand Trunk Railroad on the west side of Harrison Street. The house today is much larger than when built; several generations of the family have each added their improvements and additions. The accompanying sketch illustrates the original farmhouse.

The present owners are Mr. & Mrs. William E. Smith, who have been living in the former Schillo home for more than 30 years. Mr. Smith is the nephew of Mathias Smith, an early pioneer settler whose house is described elsewhere in this book.



SCHILLO HOME



HAYWARD HOUSE

HAYWARD HOUSE

The Hayward house, located three miles east of Merrillville, once the home of George Hayward, was built circa 1870. George came from an old, aristocratic, strait-laced English family. He was the son of a well-to-do farmer and was, from early on, instructed in the details of farming.

Soon after George married Mary Ann Sykes, he purchased 160 acres of farm land on the Old Sauk Trail and built the present two-story brick structure. Very little detail was employed in the designing of the house, and that which was used is simple and in good taste. The entrance in the main section is accentuated by a small transom, and five white, round-top windows pierce the red brick facade. The one-story porch, originally much smaller, is now enclosed.

From the kitchen, a steep, enclosed staircase leads to the second floor which contains the four bedrooms used by George and his wife, Mary Ann, and their daughters, Emily, Lotta, and Bess.

The main floor contains four rooms: kitchen, pantry, sitting room and parlor. The kitchen, with its high ceiling and wide woodwork features narrow beaded paneling, quite the fashion in that day. This author stood in the kitchen sipping apple cider graciously proffered by the present day owner and had little difficulty conjuring an image of Mrs. Hayward in a long frock, covered with an apron, serving as hostess.

In 1905, while Emily and Lotta were visiting in California, Emily suddenly died at the tender age of 19. Shortly after, George, Mary Ann, and Bess put the house up for rent and moved to Hobart. Lotta stayed behind to become the bride of William Smith.

For 25 years the Hayward homestead housed renters until it was finally sold outside the family in 1930. Today the sole surviving Hayward, Bess, still recalls the happiness and warmth of her childhood years spent in the century-old home.

WAYMAN HOUSE

The Wayman House was located on West 73rd Avenue next door to Merrillville's first post office. Seymour Wayman and his wife Huldah, were the first postmasters. The small, but cozy five-room house was built around 1865 and was the residence of Seymour and Huldah until their daughter Carrie and her husband, Alfred Phillips, took it over.

Seymour, born in New York in 1833, was a tanner and shoemaker by trade. In 1852, he married Mary Stilwell and they had three children. Mary died in 1866 leaving Seymour to raise the children. In 1867, Seymour married Huldah Green and they had one child, a daughter, Carrie Lucinda.

When Carrie married Alfred Phillips, they resided on a farm located three miles west of town until they took over the Wayman house. The Phillips children found rough and ready playmates at the house next-door, the five sons of Dr. and Mrs. Iddings.

Carrie and Alfred lived in Ross Township all of their lives. Carrie devoted much of her time and energy to the Ladies Aid Society, even serving as President of the group. Mrs. Elmer Stowell, a daughter, also spent a considerable amount of time in Ross Township and currently lives in Crown Point, Indiana.

The Wayman house has since been demolished to make way for a new brick structure.



Huldah and Seymour Wayman



The Wayman House in the background

Mrs. Huldah (Green) Wayman and her
second husband, Joel Glazier
June 2, 1915

MERRILLVILLE POST OFFICE

Centerville was renamed Merrillville, Indiana, when the town established its first post office located on West 73rd Avenue, next to the present day Kolby Garage. The town was renamed for the Merrill brothers who were very influential in town affairs. There are still Merrill descendants living in Lake County.

Letters were carried by fast horseback and sometimes by stage coaches. The cost of sending mail this way was 25 cents and it was not until 1847 that the United States issued the first postage stamp at a cost of three cents.

At that time, Merrillville residents thought it a modern miracle that a letter could be delivered many miles away for such a low price.

Often, when a postmaster or postmistress was appointed by the government, they chose to operate from their homes. Records show that in 1885 a post office was run by Silas and Lydia Zuvers from their home located two doors west of the old Methodist Church on 73rd Avenue.

In 1900, Seymour and Huldah Wayman operated the post office in the original building. They also maintained a shoe repair shop in the building so in the course of a day, Seymour would alternate between repairing shoes and selling stamps. The building, during the time Mr. Wayman was postmaster, had the only gas light in town gracing its front exposure. So important was this beacon of light to the community that Seymour and Huldah felt obliged to hurry home (on days when they were away) to turn on the only light in town.



FIRST POST OFFICE IN MERRILLVILLE (built 1844)

LENNERTZ BLACKSMITH SHOP

The Blacksmith Shop was located near what used to be called Merrill Square and was adjacent to the former gristmill-brewery. Built around 1875 by Mathias Lennertz, it was one of the two operations he ran. Initially, he ran just the smith shop. Later, he opened a feed store and connected the two buildings with an overhead cover.

Mathias was a native of Ross Township who had married his childhood sweetheart, Barbara Hoffman. The couple had nine children and some of them used to work for their father.

Blacksmiths made horse and ox shoes and applied them to the animals. Their craftsmanship was not limited to footwear for quadrupeds, however. Many blacksmiths produced all kinds of intricate hardware such as latches, hinges, andirons, farm tools, and even nails. Modern ironworkers use coal in the forges and employ a motor driven fan to force air into the fire. Pioneer smithies used charcoal to heat the metal and had to keep the fire ventilated via the use of enormous bellows that had to be pumped. Usually this task fell to an apprentice, and in this case, no doubt, Matt's son, Peter.

Easy going Mathias, who was described as having a twinkle in his eye, ran his shop for 44 years before he laid down his hammer for the last time. His retirement more or less coincided with the ushering in of a new era in which the gas engine became "king" and the workhorse was reduced in importance. Realizing this, his son Peter, converted the shop into a feed manufacturing and retail store in 1928. Electricity was installed in 1929, thereby updating the connected buildings.

Peter's son, Charles, worked in the feed store and eventually took over the business. Appropriately enough, Charles ran the first hardware store in Merrillville. In 1945, the old wood building was remodeled and cement blocks were installed to cover the wooden walls. Charles ran the business for six more years and sold it to Andrew Ban. Now Charles owns and operates the Lennertz Fireplace and Patio Store in the south Merrillville area.



MATTHIAS LENNERTZ BLACKSMITH SHOP AND FEED STORE

MERRILLVILLE SCHOOLS

The history of our area's formal education system begins in 1838 with the establishment of loosely structured class sessions in Deep River. The year 1840 saw the construction of Centerville's first school, a log building with puncheon floor, furnished with split log benches and a single desk for the teacher.

The school, located in the 7200 block on Broadway (near the present Chatterbox Restaurant), exemplified the type of "pulling together" our pioneer fathers employed to carve a civilization out of a wilderness.

These people wanted their children to be able to read and write. Attaining this goal required sharing of time, effort, and resources. For instance, the school had to be heated, so each family in turn was responsible for supplying one load of wood.

Books were scarce and few folks could afford them so the pupils shared the texts that were available. Drinking water had to be carried to the schoolhouse, and this task was also rotated. Teachers who could not find economical living accommodations for the salary of \$14.00 per month, took turns boarding in the various homes of pupils for two weeks at a time.

Classes in the Deep River School, unlike the Centerville situation, were not conducted in a building especially designated for that purpose. In 1844, Mrs. Richard Vincent embarked on a fifteen year career of teaching students in her home, beginning with a class of seven children. Later, a frame school was built, destroyed by fire, and rebuilt.

In 1870, a new building with one class room was built on land donated by the Harms family located three miles east of Broadway on 73rd Avenue. A second class room was added at a later date. It featured a luxury: a water pump in front of the building, and the universal of all school symbols, a bell atop its roof. Mrs. Donald Niksch eventually purchased the building and remodeled it for her home. Incidentally, she still has the school bell in her possession. Olive Wood was one of the known school teachers.

In later years, when the school fell into disuse, the land was purchased by the Donald Niksch family who were relatives of the Harms family. The building was a dance hall and tavern run by Edward Niksch, but during Prohibition he was forced to close it as it didn't "pay as much." It was then that the building was converted into a home and later into apartments.

In 1848, Ross Township had been legally designated a Township and divided into districts. By 1882, there were sixteen school districts including Deep River, Ainsworth, Adams, Vincent, Hurlburt, Witherall (located between Harrison and Cleveland Streets, east of the Sanitarium), Brown's Point (west of the Sanitarium), Green, Butler (across the road from the Palmer Farm), Woods (57th and Chase Street), and the Merrillville Primary. In 1896, the Ross Township School System became a single unit and the district schools fell under its jurisdiction.

Mrs. Myra Prott was one of the teachers who conducted lessons in the Vincent School following the merger. She began her career at age seventeen and handled the teaching demands of all eight grades in 1918-19 and then taught only the first four grades during 1919-20.

The first brick school was built in Merrillville in 1865 on 73rd Avenue and is now the site of the present Town Hall. There was only one other brick school in all of Lake County and local residents took great pride in their two-story, four room, red brick building with white trim. Access was gained by a wooden sidewalk leading to the doorway.

In those days the school system did not employ janitors or maintenance staffs and the job of keeping the school clean fell to the teachers and students. This was a particularly onerous task when a stove pipe would get clogged and would cause the stove to blow up or the pipes to fall down. Many times the inefficient heater would necessitate the early dismissal of classes and this did not cause any regret or grief to the students. A Mr. Zubec, 7th and 8th grade teacher, and Edna Frazier, a teacher of grades 1 through 6, had to cope as best they could with the catastrophe of a malfunctioning stove.

Many children rode the horse drawn bus to the Merrillville Primary School much to the good-natured contempt of their elders who considered the younger generation pampered for not having to brave the elements. Comparatively speaking, from today's viewpoint, it still required something of the "pioneer" spirit to endure an hour's ride in a vehicle that could hardly lay claim to built-in comfort.

Some of the more advanced models featured a stove to ward off polar winds as they ripped through the canvas curtains. What's more, as the bus became mired in the mud it probably occurred to the young men, who wrestled to free the bus, that their lot might have been easier if they had gotten to school under their own steam.

The school itself lacked facilities which are not considered luxuries by today's standards; most notably, indoor restrooms and water fountains. Drinking water was kept in a bucket with a single cup that was passed from one student to another so each could have a drink.

Lessons in the three R's, 'readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic' plus geography and physiology, were conducted from books the students brought from home. Many families owned copies of McGuffey's Reader and Ray's Arithmetic, and lent these texts to the effort of educating the children. The teachers, whose license to instruct was issued after a few weeks of college level training and the passing of a County Exam, were often in their teens, a situation which allowed for some lengthy careers. For example, Laura Lennertz taught for 44 years.

The high point of the students' education was graduation from the 8th grade. Ceremonies were held in Merrill Hall or the Methodist Church and involved all the 8th graders from all the district schools. Parents and friends were entertained by songs from the students, recitations, and the awarding of the diplomas. Of course, refreshments were served following the ceremony.

The brick building that housed the Merrillville Primary School was also used for town meetings, church school, and church services. In 1896, it became the nucleus of the town's first high school and more rooms, some gables, and a bell were added. Under the guidance of Dr. H. L. Iddings, Trustee, secondary school level courses were offered to three students: Alta Halsted, Cora Pierce, and Christina Lennertz, all of whom were allowed to progress at their own rate. All three became teachers and Miss Halsted later took up law and was admitted to the Bar.

For a number of years the school underwent many changes. For instance, between 1901 and 1908, the length of the program changed from two years under a Mr. Quillen, to one year taught by Mr. O. A. Cassidy and back to a two-year program under a Mr. Goodpastor.

At one time there were two high schools in Ross Township: Merrillville and Ainsworth. Miss Ellmore, Harry B. Calpha, and Richard Nuzum conducted classes at Merrillville. Miss Olive Wood taught at the Ainsworth School. In 1923, under Trustee Roy Hack, the two schools were consolidated with O. K. Appleman serving as Principal and Miss Wood as Assistant.

The high school was given full commission in 1925 and the program expanded to include history, science, business courses, English, agriculture, and music.

Mr. T. D. Fox was Principal during this time of growth and it was during his term that a new building was constructed to house the lower six grades. Unfortunately, the new building burned one year after opening its doors and a rebuilding project was started.

Mr. Raymond Lemmel became Principal in 1931 and the Trustee was Emil Buchfuhrer. In 1939, Mr. Claude York was named Principal and a Mr. Holmes was the Trustee. Under their leadership, an addition was made to the school that provided facilities for home economics, shop, business education, vocational agriculture, and a cafeteria.

Yet another addition was made while Edgar L. Miller was Principal and Mr. Ted Houchin was Trustee. Merrillville's steadily increasing enrollment and expanding facilities won a vote of approval from the State of Indiana in the form of a First Class Commission for the high school.

In 1951, Henry Fieler took over as Trustee and worked with careful and constant attention to obtain membership in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Merrillville High School became a part of the Association in 1953.

The year 1954 saw the construction of another new building a few blocks to the north and one block to the east of the old building. The school began operation in 1955 and has already been graced by several additions. No doubt, a large part of the 30 acre plot will be utilized over the years to provide the school community with even more sophisticated facilities.

Mr. Robert Clark, the current Principal, is a newcomer to the school system and it is anticipated that he will perpetuate the far-sighted policies of his predecessors.

In recent years, the structure of the school system has grouped all learning institutions under the jurisdiction of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of the Ross Township Schools. Dr. Donald Kaupke, at this writing, is the Superintendent and works with the Board of Education in the same way the former trustees did to ensure the coordination of the programs and the educational benefits for all pupils. The type of curriculum offered and the maintenance of academic standards are executed by these able people.

The development of the town's two junior high schools, Harrison and Pierce, has been of immeasurable value in broadening the foundation the student has prior to more advanced study at the high school level.

Harrison Junior High on West 61st Avenue was built in 1971. It is very modern in design as well as in outlook. Mr. Larry Martin, with eight years in the school system, serves as Principal.

Pierce Junior High, two blocks east of Broadway at 70th Place, was built in 1928. Currently, Mr. John Lisman, Principal, brings many years of educational experience to the job. This building has a "homey" atmosphere and boasts carpeted floors and wall murals in the hallways. One of the recent additions that brings people from the area is the Planetarium, where "sky" shows are held periodically.

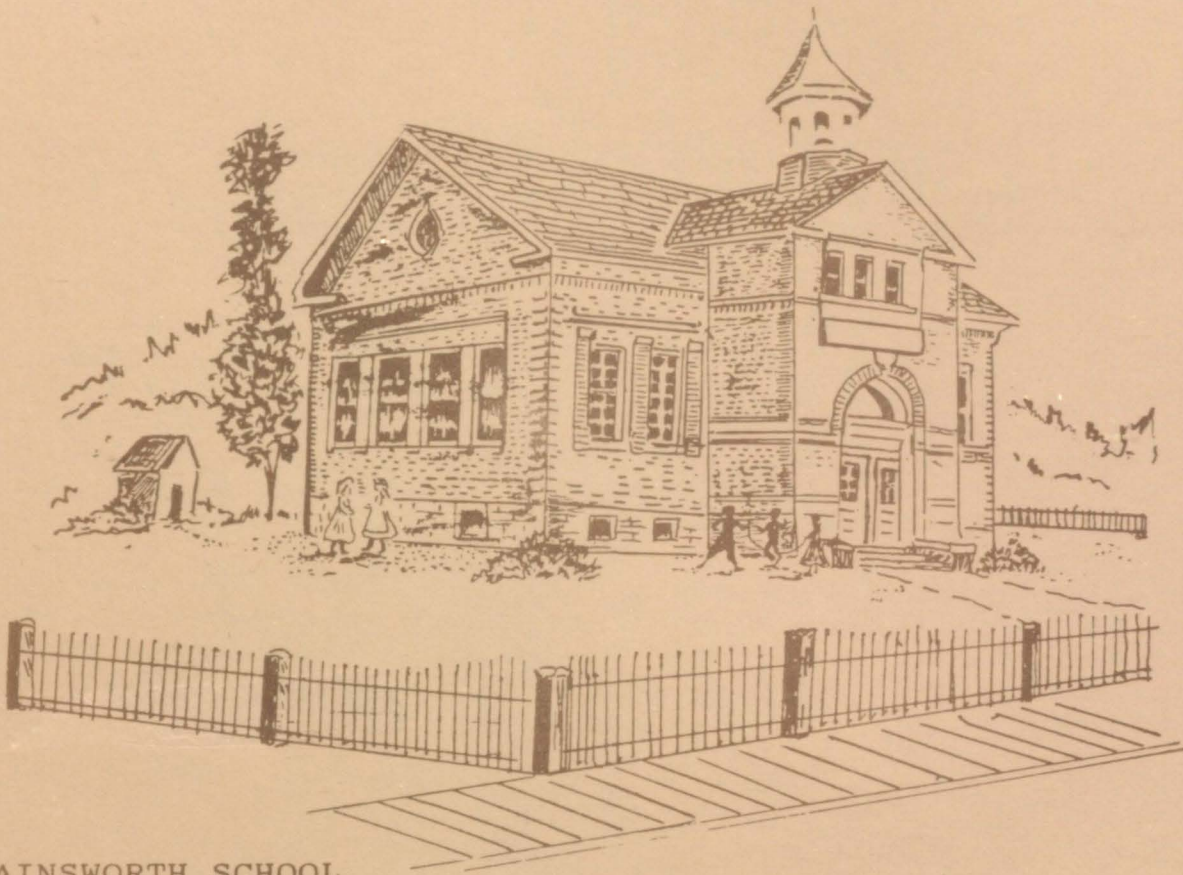
Merrillville has five elementary schools that undertake the awesome task of transforming babbling youngsters into literate adolescents able to communicate with the adult world. Listed below are the names of the schools and the principals who are in charge at this writing:

Edgar L. Miller School
Henry P. Fieler School
Homer Iddings School
Jonas E. Salk School
John Wood School

Mr. Robert Tomb
Mr. George Putz
Mr. Robert Moore
Mr. Daniel Smith
Mr. Paul Damm



In front of Deep River School
1st & 2nd Grades
circa 1900



AINSWORTH SCHOOL
Built in 1912



DEEP RIVER SCHOOL

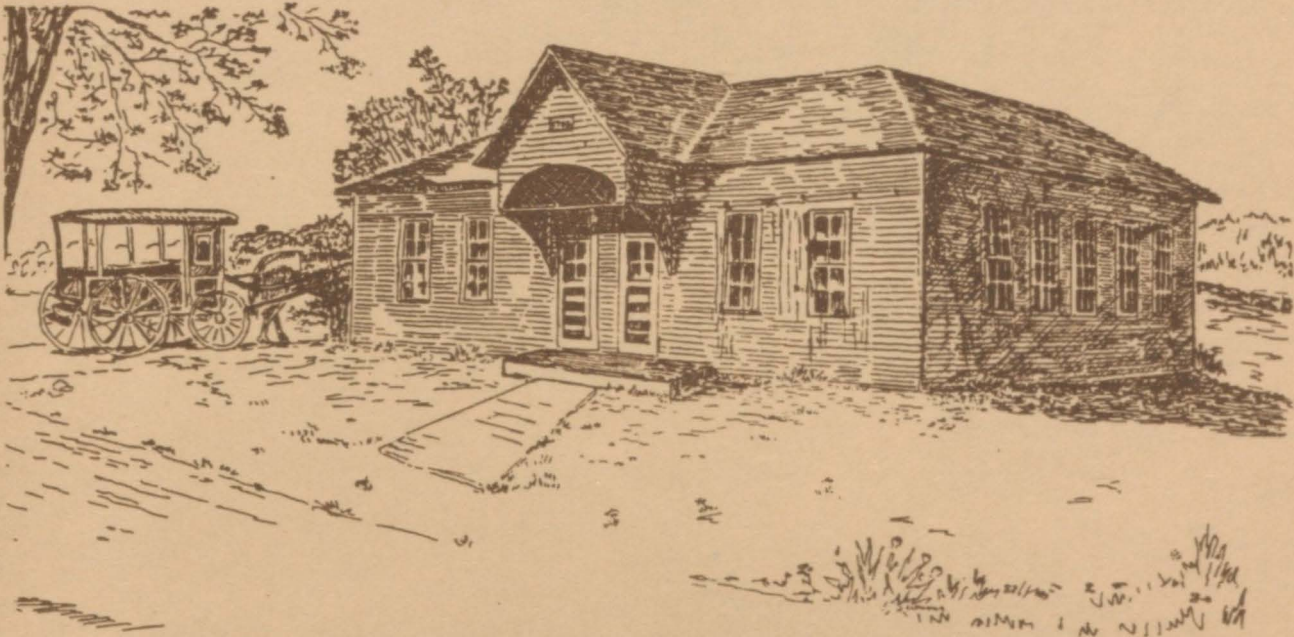
THE TWO ROOM AINSWORTH SCHOOL HOUSE

Ainsworth School, so called because of its location on Ainsworth Road, was built on land donated by the Foreman family. Originally, the structure was a one room school with a fieldstone foundation that may have been erected around 1870.

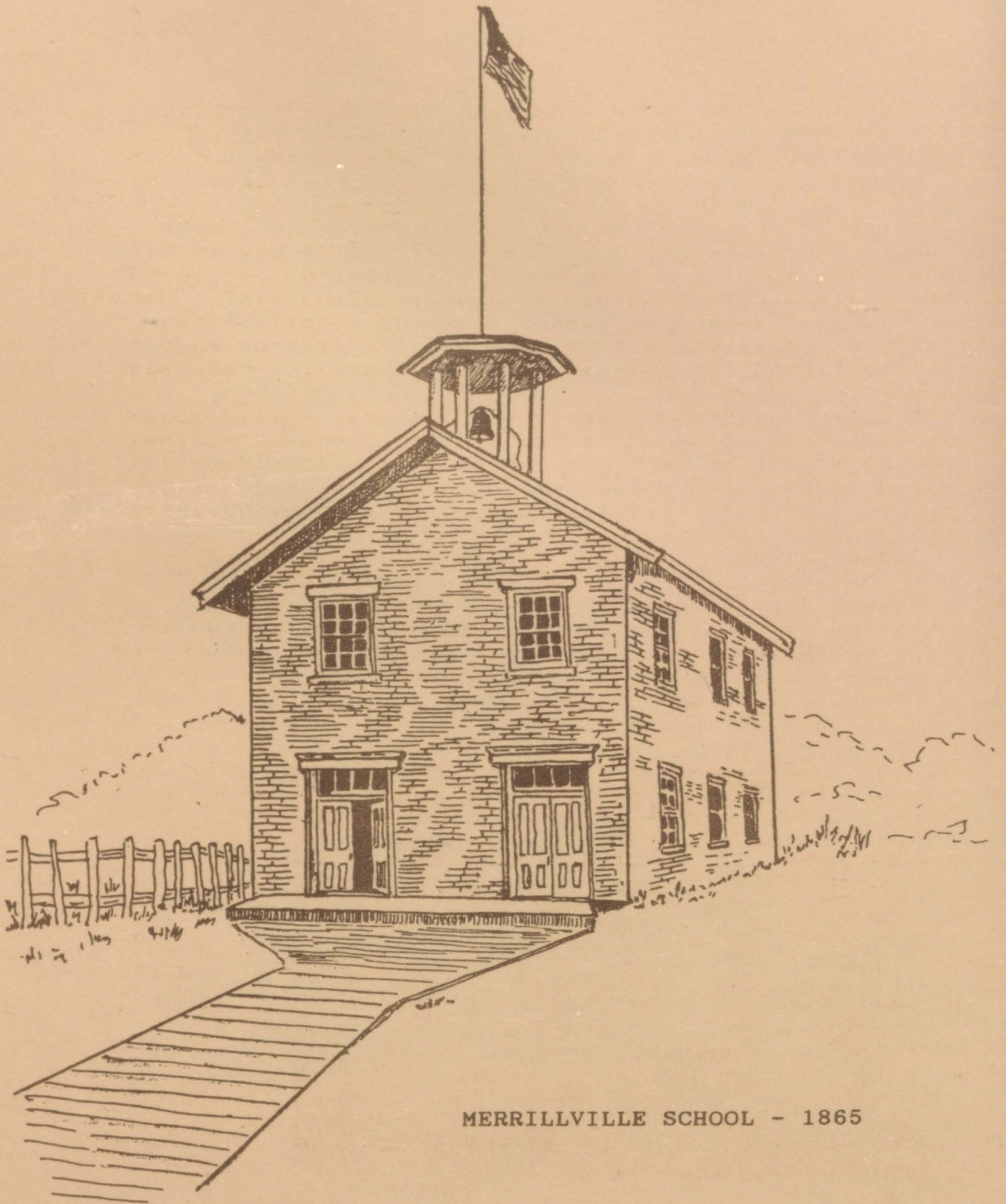
Sometime later, a second room was added and the newer section had a brick foundation. A coat closet separated the two rooms. There is a wooden sign on the building dating it to 1900, but the stone foundation is representative of an earlier period of time.

The Foreman family not only donated the land but also their time. Mr. Otto Foreman remembers collecting wood used to heat the rooms and in later years he drove the horse drawn bus that delivered students to school. Teachers included Nellie Meyers and Olive Wood.

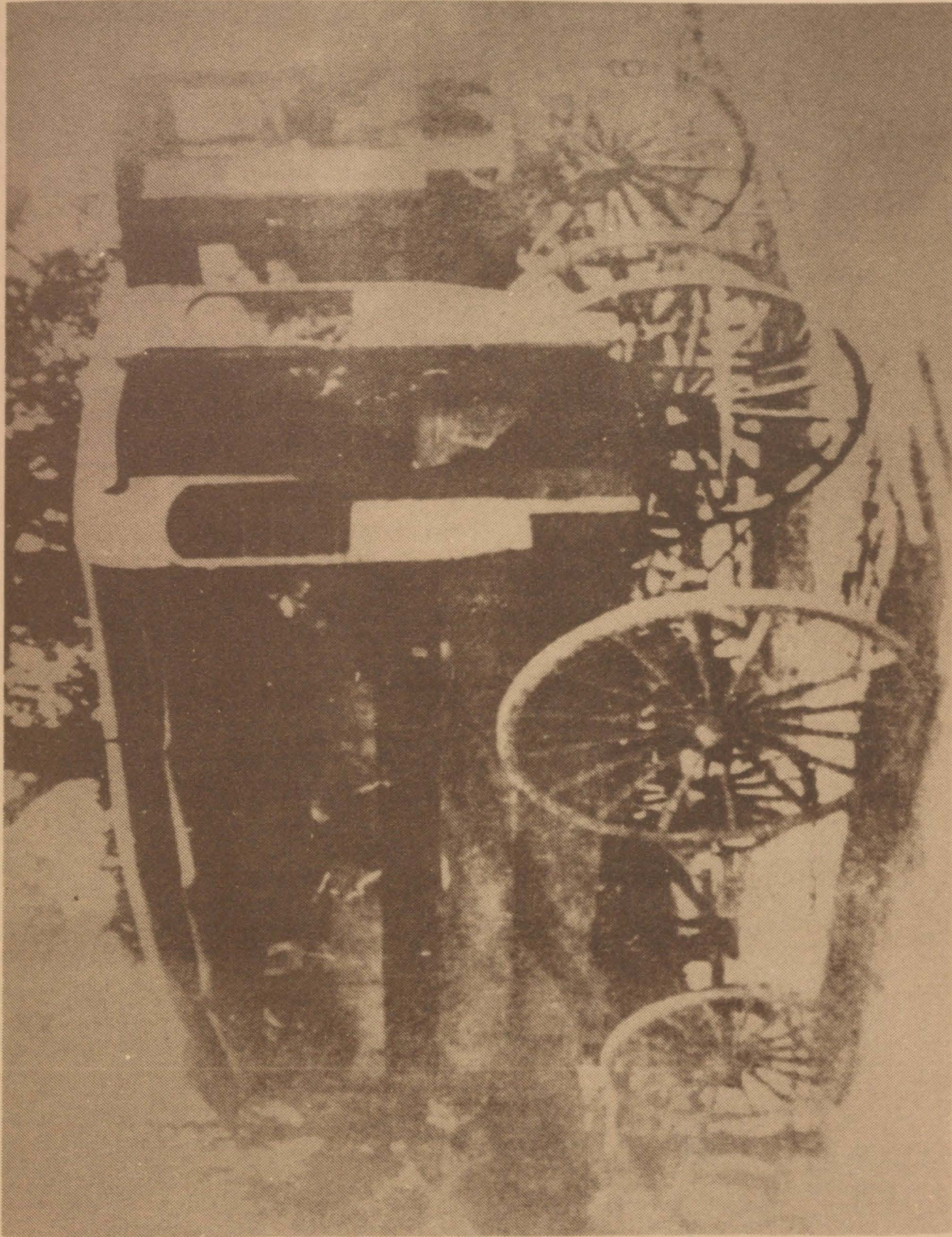
The building has been in disuse for quite a while. All tangible traces of the learning process are gone. The building is weather-worn and in need of paint. No books or blackboards are to be found on the premises. Yet, somehow, one can visualize the children running and playing on the tree-shaded grounds and one can imagine students inside reciting their lessons as in days of yesterday.



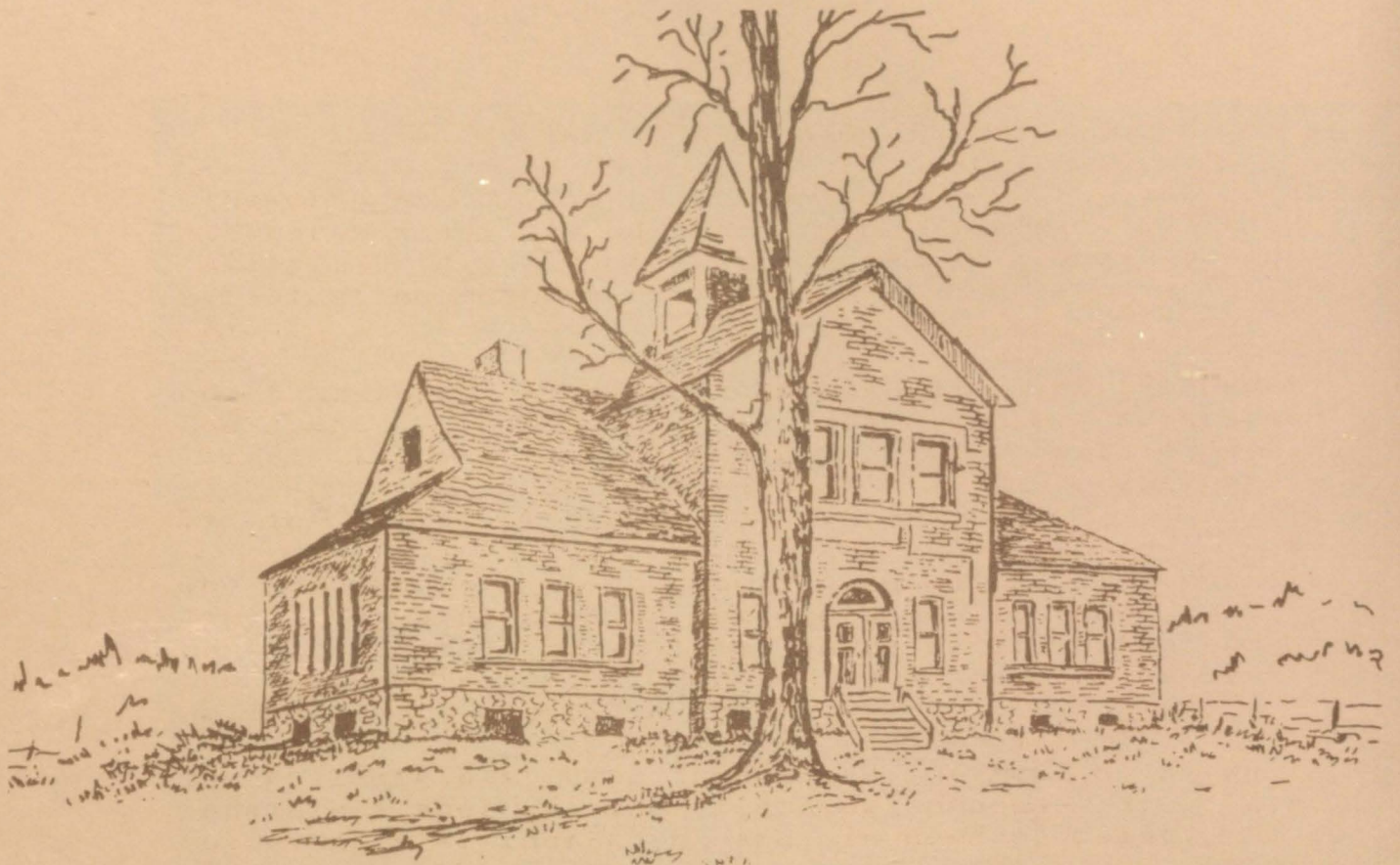
AINSWORTH TWO-ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE



MERRILLVILLE SCHOOL - 1865



ROSS TOWNSHIP SCHOOL BUS - 1900



MERRILLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
Built 1896



THE OLD PRIMARY BUILDING - built 1896
(Currently the TOWN HALL)



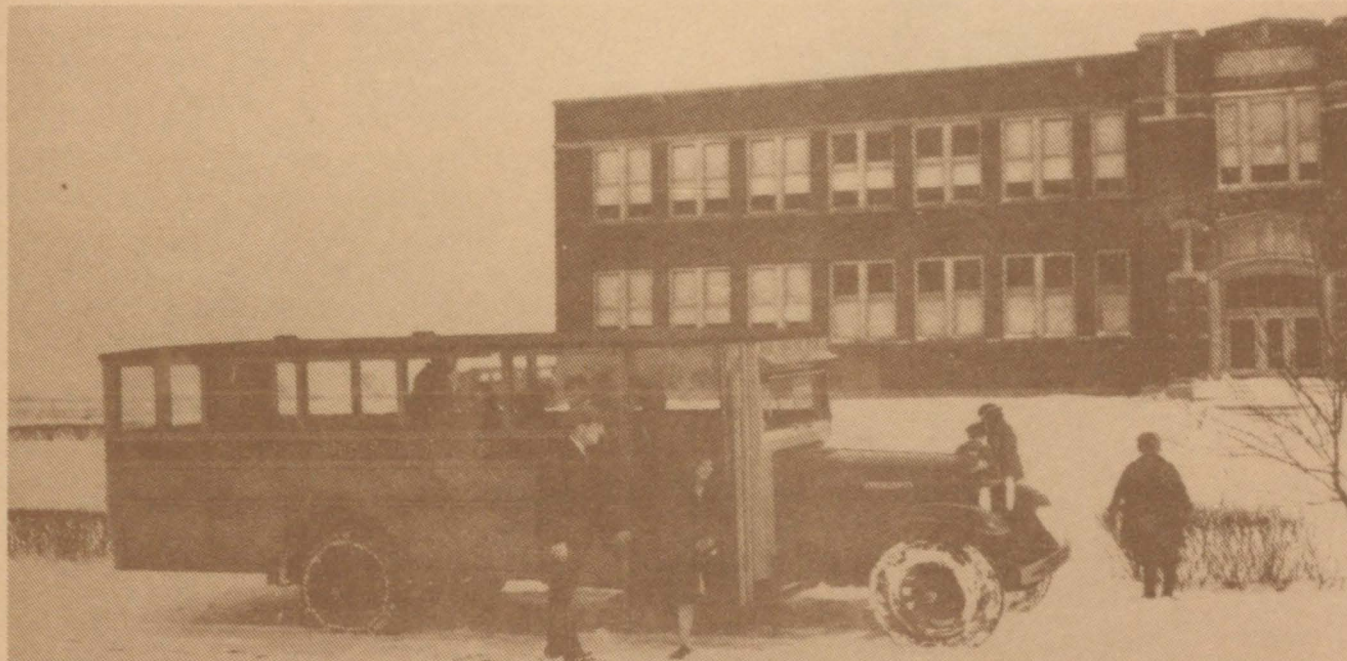
MERRILLVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Front Row: Gladys Demmon, Lenore Boyd, Lena Neuman, Emma Neuman, Blanche Kuehl, Edith Pierce, Wilma Popp, Mary Cooper, Goldie Goodrich.

Second Row: Willis Saxton, Fred Schultz, John Waltz, George Stevens, Lester Borrmann, Lyle Caugherty, Fred Borrmann, Ralph Severance.

Third Row: Louis Huth, Milton Carpenter, Florian Saberniak, Robert Popp, Raymond Mau, Maurice Franz, Oliver Kleine.

Teacher Essa Crowell; Music Teacher Laura Houk.



School Bus in front of Merrillville High School - 1932
(Currently Pierce Junior High)
Bus Driver, Charles Boyd



LAURA LENNERTZ

Laura was born to William and Helena (Schillo) Lennertz in 1888. At age 20, she embarked on a teaching career that was to span more than four decades. This patient, gentle woman taught for twelve years in Griffith and for thirty years in Merrillville. Never married, Laura resided with her uncle's family, the John Schillo family.

She is fondly remembered as a teacher with remarkable abilities who could command discipline from her class without ever raising her voice. One person was moved to suggest that a school be named for her; so great was the regard in which she was held. Laura suffered a stroke in 1950 and after experiencing declining health for several years, she died in 1957.

THE MERRILL-PIERCE HOME

The residence pictured here (as it looked in 1932) has the double distinction of being the second oldest house in town and of belonging originally to William Merrill. William and his brother, Dudley Merrill, were very influential in the formation of the town back in the 1850s that the townspeople honored the brothers by changing the name of the town to Merrillville.

As early as 1840, William operated a general merchandise store and by 1850, he had established a blacksmith shop. He supplied the thirty or so families from the community with horseshoes as well as nails, hinges, latches and other pieces of hardware so necessary to the 19th Century farmers.

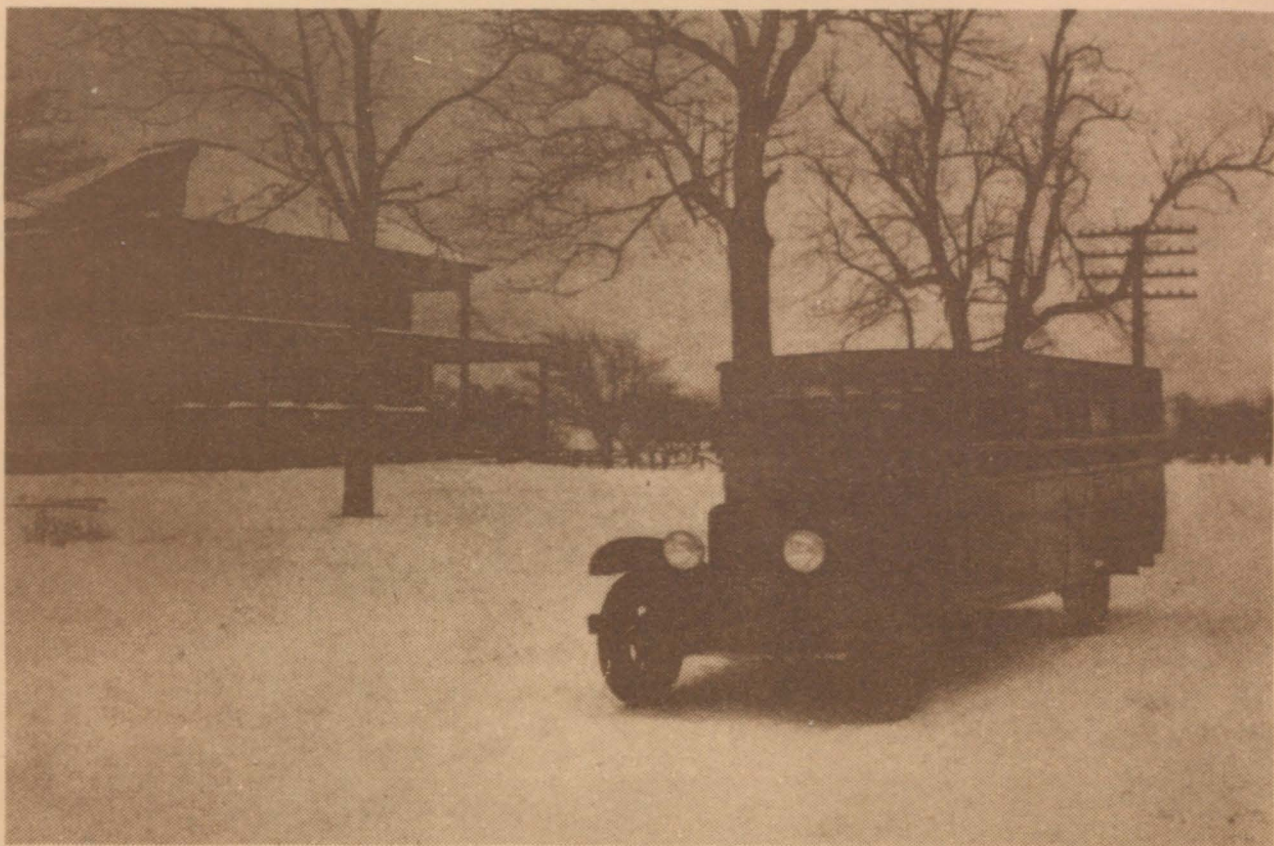
William was a man of high business acumen, and through his capable management, his industry, and his economy, he amassed a comfortable estate. In 1857, he had a large two-story home erected on his farm, located on the north side of Old Sauk Trail now known as East 73rd Avenue. When built, the house boasted a large porch that spanned the front and terminated on the east side. Unusual features included the double hipped roof, and the small panel windows spaced symmetrically across the front and sides of the house.

Three years after the house was built, William died leaving his widow, Caroline, and seven children. Their son, George, operated the farm with the help of the hired man, John Bonn. In 1875, Caroline married Dudley Merrill and moved to a new location after selling the farm to the Sam White Family.

Then, in 1915, the farm became the Pierce home. Clifford, son of Marion H. and Katherine (Horst) Pierce, married Millicent Coleman. They had five children: Carmen, Joseph, Carol, Marion, and Terry.

Pierce owned a substantial amount of farm land that was divided up and sold. Pierce Junior High School is located on a tract of land that used to be part of the Merrill-Pierce farm. The school honors the man from whom it took its name by displaying Clifford's likeness in the school office.

Clifford died in 1973, leaving two of his children in the area. Daughter Carmen still lives on land that was part of the Pierce farm. She is married to Delmar Nelson, owner of Nelson Well and Pump Service. Son, Terry Pierce, lives in the Forest Hills subdivision with his wife, the former Barbara Rhodes.



THE MERRILL-PIERCE HOME
1932

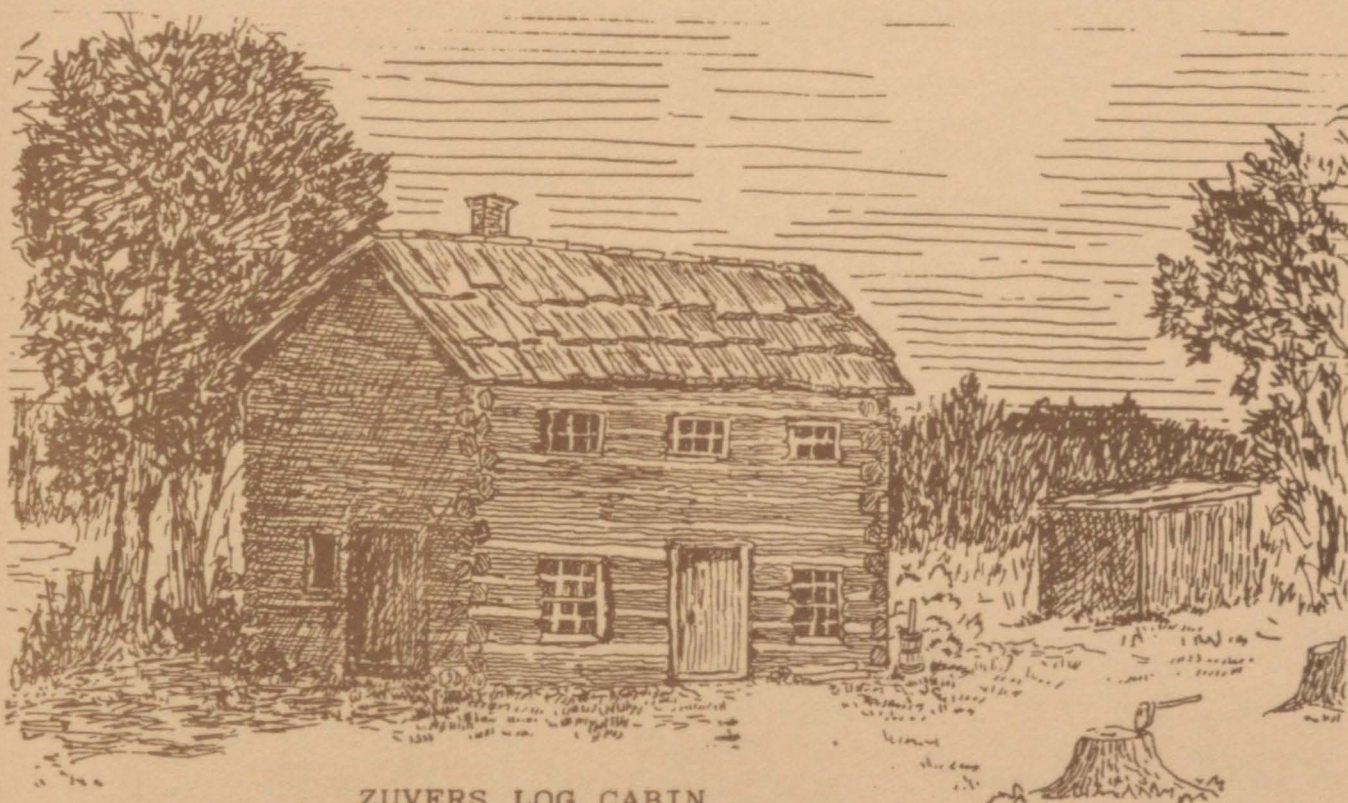
ZUVERS LOG CABIN

The Zuvers' log cabin was located on 73rd Avenue and was built by Mathias Elbert for Amos Zuvers in 1849. The logs for the two-story cabin were hewn from nearby trees and the dwelling revealed a way of life as well as the character of its owner.

Amos Zuvers was a rugged individual who trapped, traded, and traveled with the Potawatomi Indians. He spoke their language fluently and preferred their company to that of many white men. He traveled across the country on horseback as well as on foot and he had the cabin constructed after he returned from his California gold-hunting expedition.

To build the house, Mathias Elbert used a broadax and an adz with a seven inch blade. The adz was shaped like a hoe and was used to give a smooth finish to timber that would show inside the cabin.

When Amos died, his son, Solomon Zuvers occupied the house until 1898, selling it to Myron Burge. It was then sold to Alfred Phillips who willed it to his daughter, Eleanor Stowell, who eventually sold it to Callen Keaton. Keaton, who lived in the next house west, removed it in 1946. The cabin was so well built that it had to be removed log by log.



ZUVERS LOG CABIN

GOODRICH HOME

The ancestral home of the Goodrich family was built on Goodrich Road, today known as Clay Street, one-half mile from the Vincent School. The dwelling was built by Charles Goodrich, son of Thomas and Sara (Boyd) Goodrich.

Easygoing Charles was raised with his brother Perry and their sisters Annie, Belle, and Evelyn, on a farm that bordered on Mississippi Street. He applied his knowledge of agricultural skills to his own land and developed a productive grain farm and raised staples for the family larder.

Charles and his wife Carolyn, and their six children, lived comfortably in the two-story farm house. Their proximity to the Vincent School, which their children attended, made it convenient for the various teachers to board with them. One teacher who is well remembered is Lillian Keilman.

In addition to doing their part to ensure the future of the educational system by housing some of the teachers, the Goodrich family members were also staunch supporters of the Methodist Church. It was indeed a heartwarming sight to behold the family of eight, freshly scrubbed and dressed for the occasion, bumping down the lane in their horse-drawn buggy on their way to Sunday Services.

Misfortune befell the family in the form of an injury to the head of the household. Charles fell from the barn and was so debilitated by the accident that he was unable to run the farm. Son, Arthur, left school and under his mother's guiding hand, assumed responsibility for the management of the farm.

Carolyn, strong willed and hard working, was no stranger to shouldering burdens that sprang from the tragedies of others. For instance, she took in her daughter Cora's children when they lost their mother and she raised her son Clarence's four children when his wife died.

When Arthur married Henrietta Sullivan, he brought her to the old homestead to live and they resided there for ten years. They built a new home across Route 30 on Sullivan family land and Henrietta still lives there today--Arthur having passed on.

Arthur's sister, Ida, married August Kaiser and they moved into the Goodrich home after Arthur and Henrietta moved to their new home. In 1939, the old farmhouse was sold to NIPSCO (Northern Indiana Public Service Company) and they in turn have rented it to various tenants over the years.

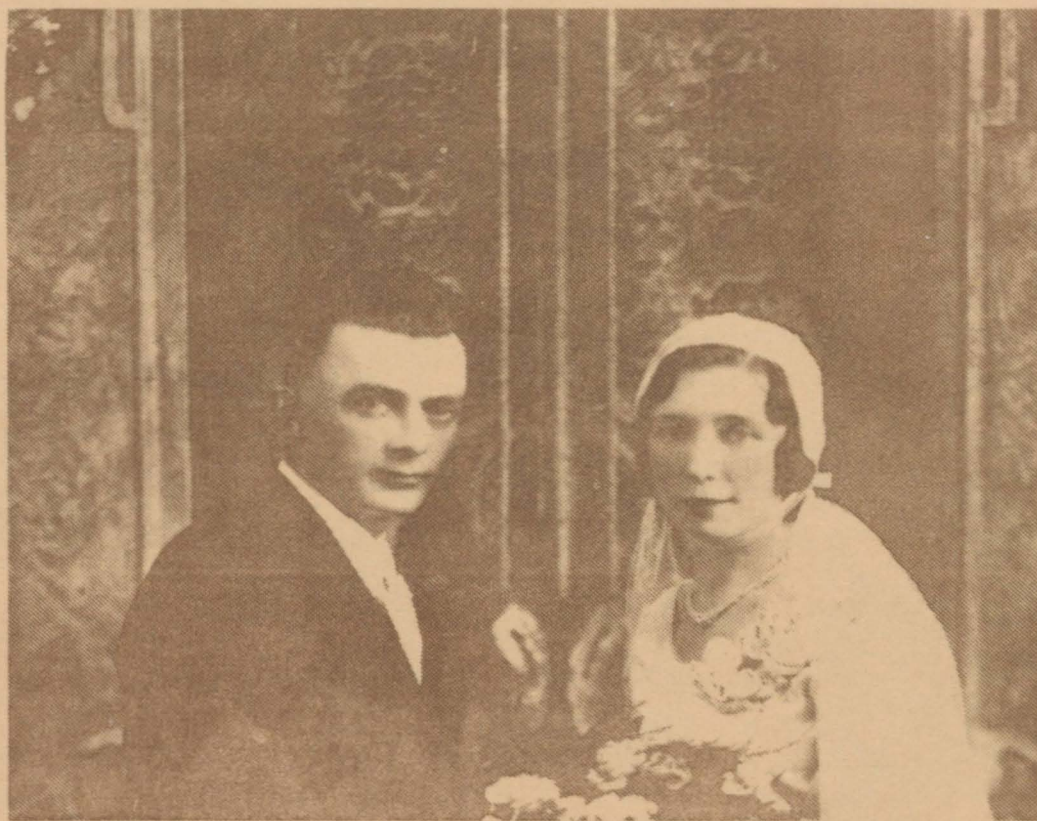
The house, suffering from neglect due to the absence of a permanent owner to give it the "tender loving care" it deserves, still has a certain charm about it reminiscent of a summer cottage. Too large to really be called a cottage by any definition, the house has a sheltered quality about it that gives the illusion of smallness most likely due to the full foliage surrounding it. Climbing roses and flowering bushes coupled with grand old trees makes one think the house is "peeking" through the greenery. This, in contrast to the many outbuildings and barns exposed to the sun and the rain with nary a tree nearby for shade, still provides the viewer with a complete picture of what was once a very busy and prosperous farm.



GOODRICH HOME



ARTHUR AND HENRIETTA (SULLIVAN) GOODRICH
1927



GEORGE AND GRACE GILL
1933

SULLIVAN FARMHOUSE

Nestled in the green corn fields of Ross Township about three miles southeast of Merrillville just off U. S. 30 stands the Sullivan ancestral home. It was built by Patrick Sullivan, who was born in the highlands of County Down, Ireland and who came to America in 1850.

Patrick settled in Hobart, Indiana, where he met, wooed, and won the hand of Sarah Fowler, who also hailed from the "Auld Sod". Sarah came here from Ireland in 1853 with her brother, Ted.

Patrick and Sarah and their three children lived in La Grange County before moving to Ross Township in 1896 along with Ted Fowler. Patrick purchased 100 acres from a Mr. Vincent and erected the home pictured in this account. The two-story frame house faces 83rd Avenue and while not overly large, was quite comfortable and compared to the small existing house it replaced, it must have seemed like a mansion. It contained a large parlor, a combination kitchen and dining room (heated by the iron cookstove), and one bedroom on the first floor. Two low, chamber bedrooms were entered off a narrow hallway upstairs.

As time passed, Patrick purchased more land until he had a total of 138 acres. Most of the farming, however, was carried out by son Thomas as Patrick had lost the sight in one eye as a result of an injury at Gettysburg in the Civil War. Generally failing health soon forced his well-deserved retirement from farm chores. Patrick and Sarah remained on the farm until their deaths.

The house was occupied by four successive generations of the Sullivan family for more than 60 years. Thomas Sullivan's children were born and raised there, and upon his death in 1935, the land was divided among the six children.

Edward and Arthur inherited the house along with their portion of the acreage. Edward soon bought out Arthur's share of the house and lived in it until 1956 when he sold it to Howard Ewen. The Sullivan holdings had been reduced earlier when the Federal Government bought a portion of the land in 1937 to be used for the building of U. S. 30.



SULLIVAN HOUSE

WEIS HOMESTEAD

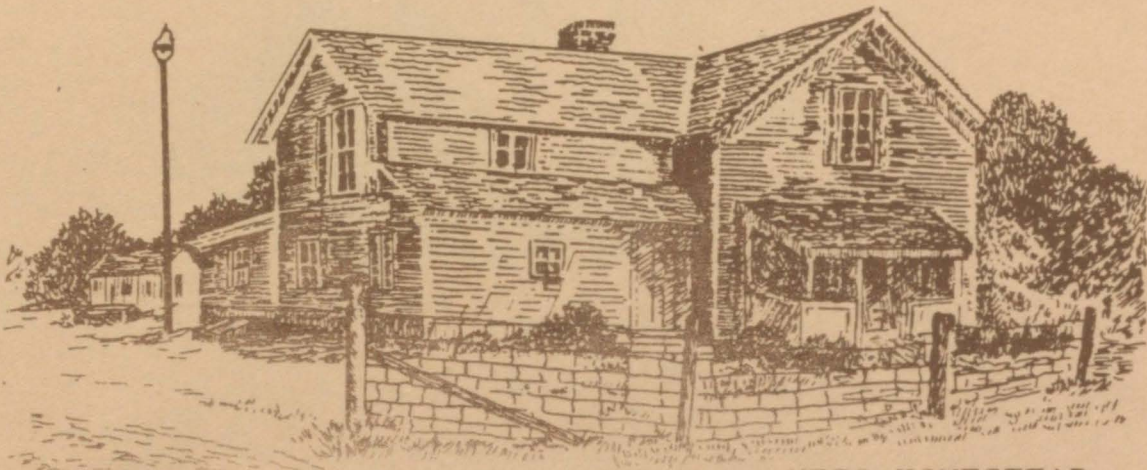
Among the pioneer dwellings still standing in Ross Township, the Weis home is one of the few still owned by a descendant of the original owner and builder. This house, located on the east side of Madison Street, south of U. S. 30, was built about 1869.

John Weis came to Lake County, Indiana, from Germany in 1847 with his parents. The family settled in St. John, Indiana, where John was reared to handle the responsibilities of farm life. After his marriage to Elizabeth Grimmer, he purchased a large farm in Ross Township upon which he built his home. There his eleven children were born and raised, and there he lived until his death.

Son, Mathias, born in 1866, married Theresa Klein of St. John, Indiana, and moved to Chicago Heights, Illinois. After his mother, Elizabeth, passed away, Mathias moved his family to his childhood home. The last two of his ten children were born on the farm. In 1909, due to his ill health, he moved his family to Texas and sold the farm to his sister, Mary Weis. She was married to John Gartner and they were living in Hammond, Indiana, where they had operated a saloon for several years. They, Mary and John, returned to Merrillville and worked the farm until they retired. Their son, Leo Gartner and his wife, Cora (Waltz) Gartner, occupied the old dwelling until their new brick home was completed nearby. The farmhouse is currently occupied by one of Cora's relatives.

The Weis dwelling is a typical example of farmhouses built near the end of the 19th century. It is two stories covered with clapboard siding and features a gabled roof and a small porch set in the angle. Only a few minor changes have been made over the years--enclosing the porch and re-siding to name two. Still standing alongside the house is an old bell which was used for many years to inform the family of dinner-time, the arrival of visitors, or impending danger!

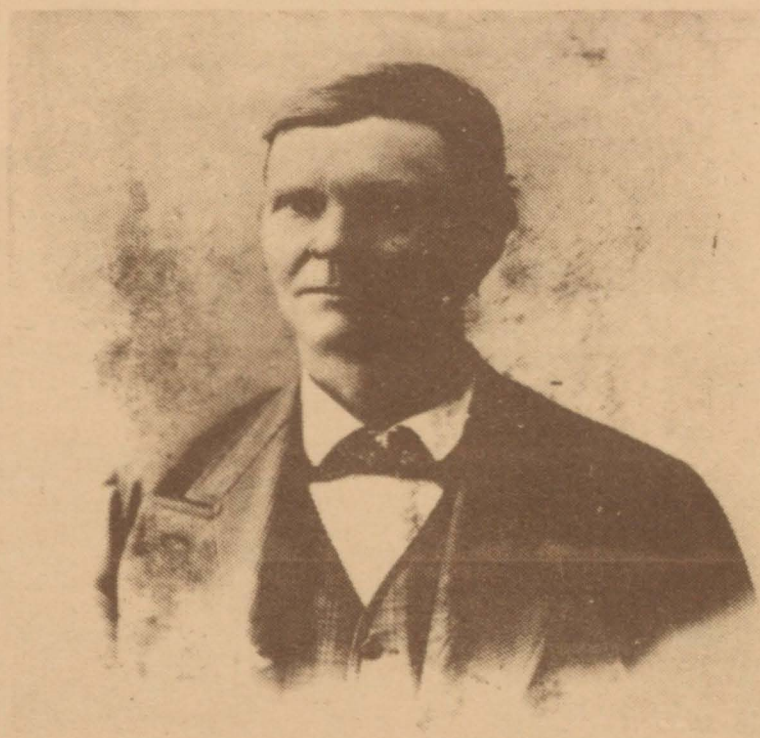
The old homestead has seen the round of marriages, births, and deaths in the Weis family. No one knows what the future has in store for the house. There are three young grandchildren who still live in Merrillville. Maybe one of them will take a turn at maintaining the ancestral home.



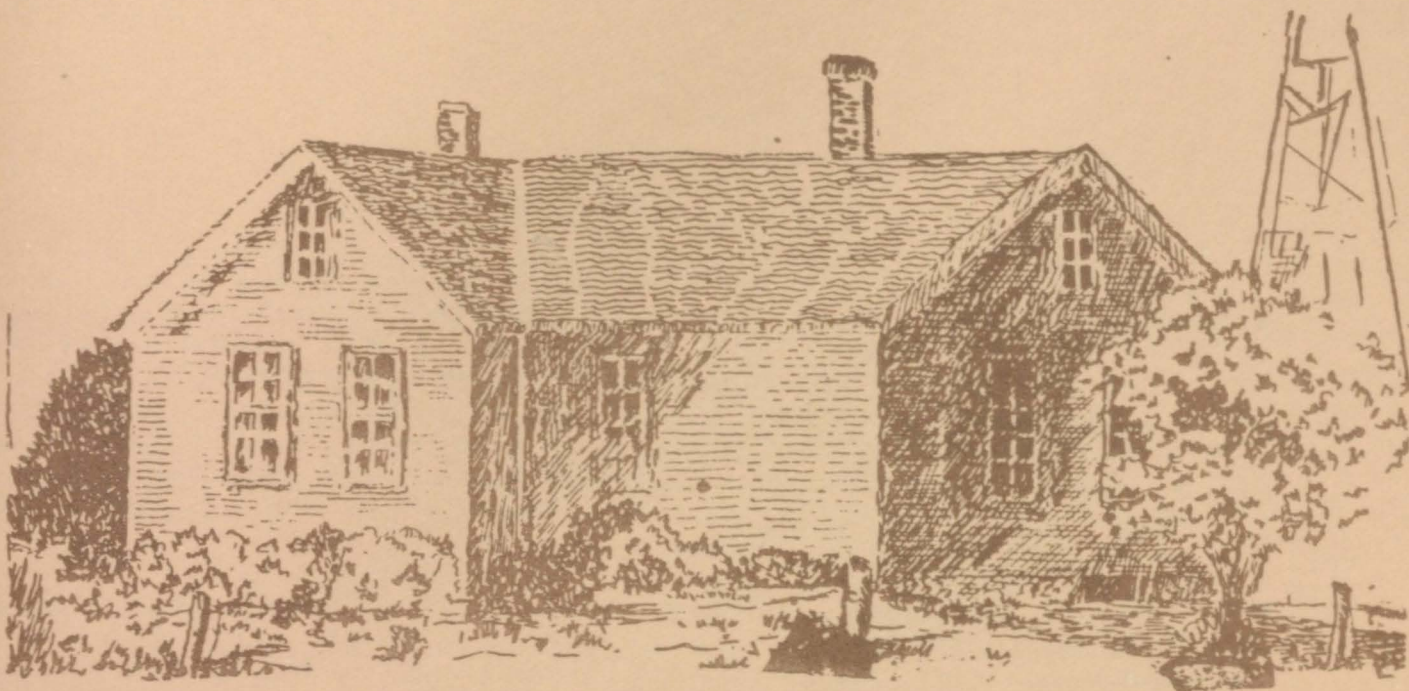
WEIS HOMESTEAD



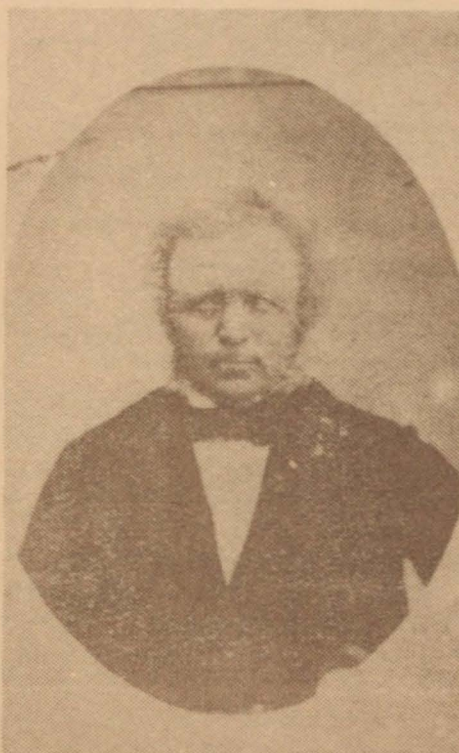
ELIZABETH (GRIMMER) WEIS



JOHN A. WEIS, JR.



MATHIAS SMITH HOMESTEAD



MATTHIAS SMITH

MATTHIAS SMITH HOMESTEAD

When Ross Township was still a wilderness, heavy with timber, swamps, and wild game, Mathias Smith, a native of Germany, settled in this area. With the help of his sons, he cleared the land and built his home where he would reside his entire life. The house, built in 1845 of simple construction, was a one-story frame dwelling with a gabled roof, clapboard siding and a small side porch. The windows were tall and narrow. An addition to the home provided separate living quarters for son John and his wife, Anna.

Mathias, an educated man, was not too enthused about running the farm and left the management of it to his two sons. Mathias was very interested in public affairs and enjoyed surveying. He became one of the first surveyors in Lake County and had the distinction of being the first one to delineate the boundaries of Burns Ditch.

After Mathias' death in 1887, his sons and their families took turns living in the old house. Toney and Margaret (Hoffman) Smith occupied the house from 1914 to 1921 and then turned it over to Toney's brother, John. When the house outlived its usefulness for John, Toney sold it to John A. Gross who in turn sold it to Dwight Kender. At that time Toney Smith paid the rent on the house which allowed his brother, Willie Smith, to live in it.

After a land subdivision and reorganization, Jacob Smith bought the house and had it relocated just east of Broadway. Jacob then rented the house to a bachelor named Joseph Elbert. When young, Joseph was known to be a mischievous lad and never did outgrow his adventurous ways even as an adult.

Joseph lived in the Smith house during Prohibition. The Volstead Act had inspired some of the local citizens to distill their own spirits and Joseph was no exception. So, behind closed doors and shaded windows he operated a still. Unfortunately, his "moonshine" operation resulted in a disaster. The century old house, with its dry timber and with the presence of the highly flammable brew, produced a roaring conflagration that rapidly reduced the home to mere ashes.

UNDERWOOD HOUSE

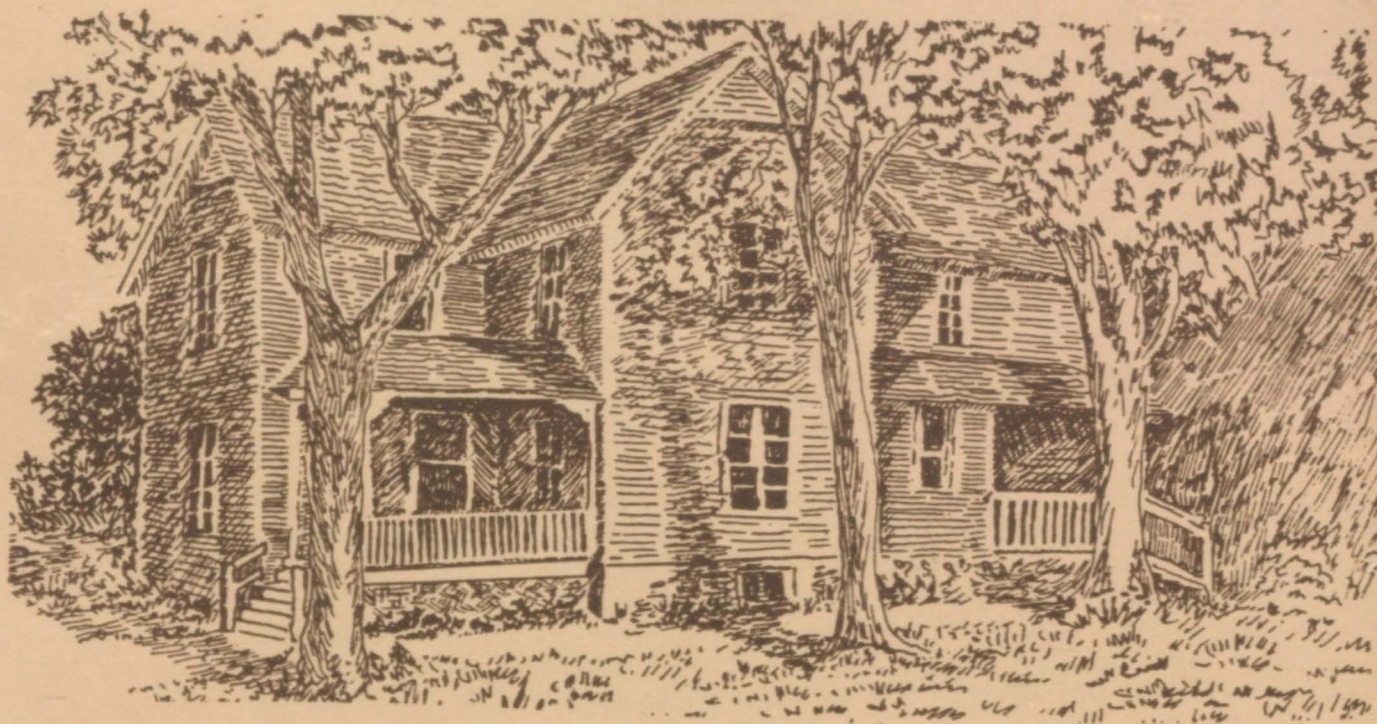
The old Underwood house is located on West 73rd Avenue on the west side of the Town Hall. It is the property of the Town of Merrillville and no decision has been made as to its future.

The large two-story dwelling was built by Winfield Scot Burge about 1880. It served as a home for Winfield and his wife, Mary Jane (Demmon) and their ten children until they moved to a farm Mary Jane inherited from her father, Julius Demmon.

In the 1920s, Frank Underwood purchased the home and moved in along with his two sisters, Clara Underwood and Mary Castle after vacating their farm which was located on the southwest corner of Mississippi Street and Route 30. Frank, a confirmed bachelor for many years, startled the community when, at the age of 60, he took Mrs. Nettie Macy as his bride.

Over the years, the house was rented or owned by several families. Its location near the Old Primary School (now the Town Hall) led to interactions between the occupants and the school children. One little girl, who intensely disliked the taste of the school's drinking water, arranged a trade whereby she could get all the water she desired from the Underwood House (which was supplied by a different well) in exchange for eggs she found in nests behind the school.

The fate of the Underwood house is not certain; however it could become a useful public building, or home, or it could be completely obliterated. Many 18th Century homes are threatened today because we view them in the name of progress rather than in a historical sense. Hopefully, this partial record of some of Merrillville's early homes and their occupants will inspire us to restore many of the historical dwellings.



UNDERWOOD HOUSE
Circa 1880
Originally built by Winfield and Mary Jane (Demmon) Burge



WINFIELD SCOT BURGE AND MARY JANE (DEMMON) BURGE
WITH SEVEN OF THEIR TEN CHILDREN:
Arthur, Mary, Lula, Ralph, Clara, Bertha, and Elizabeth



TWINS: Catherine and Barbara Berens

THE OLD BERENS HOUSE

It is popularly believed that pioneer families quickly threw together one room log cabins upon their arrival to shelter them until such time as they could build a home more to their liking. The old Berens house is representative of another species of interim housing used by many settlers. This form was a three room structure--one room under the rafters and a kitchen and a bedroom separated by a hall on the first floor.

Peter Schillo built this house in 1845, two years after he arrived here from Germany on land he obtained from the government for \$1.87 an acre. Over the years he acquired more land and eventually sold the house with the surrounding acreage.

August Niksch bought the house and stayed there with his family until 1863. The beginning of the Civil War afforded August the opportunity to acquire enough money to buy a larger farm. It was customary for the affluent to hire surrogates to take the place of their sons on the field of battle. By going to war in someone else's stead as a member of the Indiana Volunteers Company, August earned \$300 with which he purchased a forty acre parcel located on 73rd Avenue near Broadway.

After August sold the original Schillo farm, the property changed hands many times before John Berens, another German immigrant, came into possession. The two houses and the accompanying land were sold to Berens in 1883 for \$475. (The origin of the second house is unknown--perhaps it was added as the Schillo family grew.) Mr. Berens, his wife Anna, and children, Mary and John Jr. came to Ross Township in 1880. The twin daughters, Catherine and Barbara, were born when the family resided on the former Schillo farm. Mr. Berens ran a grist mill in Merrillville as well as a cider press (which was located next to his home) and he also peddled meat throughout the area.

John Sr. died in 1908 and Mrs. Berens later married widower Peter Schneider and they continued to live in the home for many years.

In 1925, Mathias Lennertz purchased the house and land to be used for rental purposes, and in that capacity provided shelter for many Merrillville residents throughout the years.

The last known occupants were Leroy and Neva Wadman. In 1956, the building suffered an ignominious demise when the fire department had to burn it because of its dangerous condition.



BERENS HOUSE



BERENS FAMILY

TOP: Daughter Mary, Son John Jr.
Mrs. Anna Berens and Mr. John Berens
Twin daughters, Catherine and Barbara

MELLON PIONEER HOME

Just one mile east of Broadway on 54th Avenue, near the old Catholic Cemetery, is a large open field where once stood the pioneer home of the Mellon family.

Dennis Mellon, the builder of the vanished dwelling, was born in County Down, Ireland in 1802, at a time when Ireland was growing rapidly. By the time Dennis was of age, the country was so overpopulated and food so scarce that thousands of Irish people poured out of their country and many made their way to America.

In 1834 Dennis Mellon and his family were among the droves who tearfully but bravely left the homeland that could not support them and sailed for America hoping to find peace and security in the new land. Settling first in New York, the family was blessed with another child and by 1842 they had relocated in Ross Township.

Dennis purchased a large tract of land that same year on which he erected his two-story frame, clapboard sided, house. Like most early pioneers, he used the materials which were available in the immediate vicinity. Various sized field stones were laboriously brought up from the fields by members of the Mellon family and were used to build a fireplace. The larger boulders were utilized as corner stones under the house and a large, flat stone served as a front step. When all was said and done, the Mellons had a six room residence supplemented by a lean-to that did double duty as a wash house and as an area for canning and storing.

The Mellon family was devoutly Catholic and lent their efforts to furthering the causes of the Church. In fact, in 1850, Dennis generously donated four acres of land to the Catholic Church to be used for the purpose of building a church and providing space for a cemetery. This first Catholic Church in Merrillville was called St. John the Baptist Church.

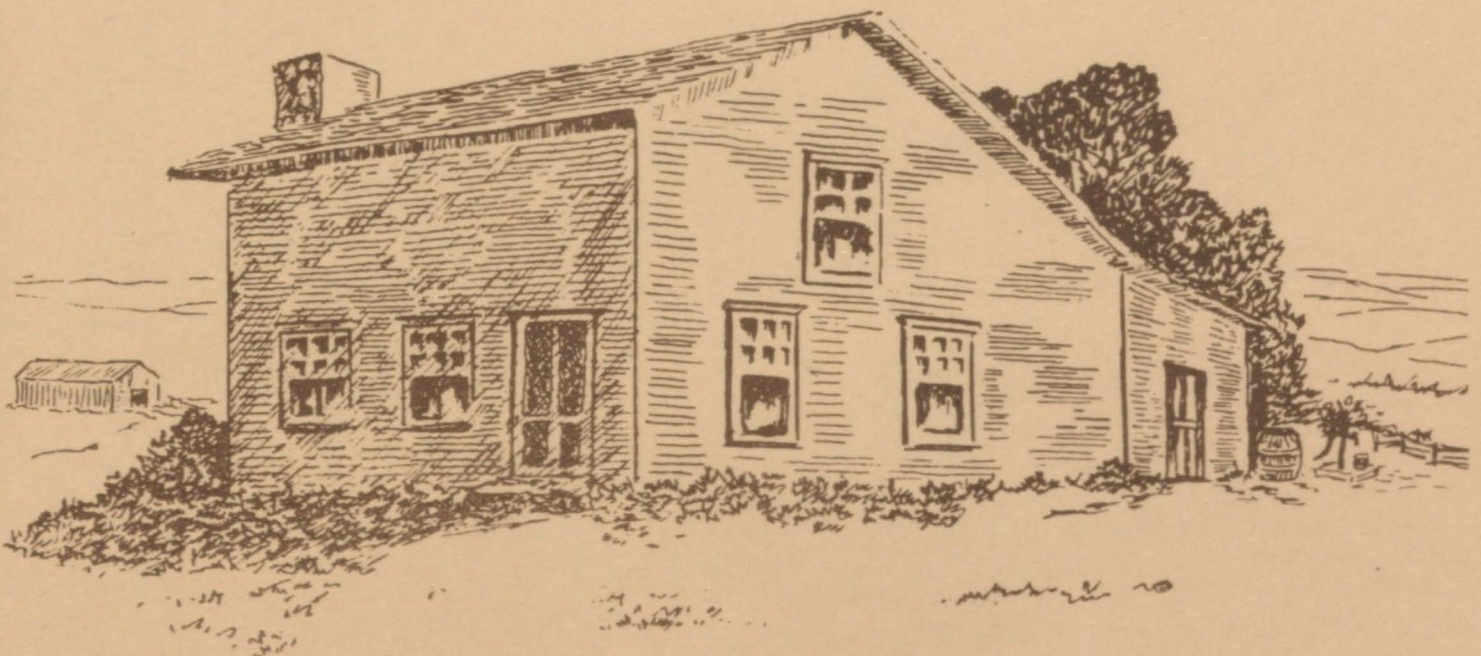
Before the log cabin church was built, Sunday Masses were held in various homes of the parishioners including the home of the Mellons. Mrs. Mellon would make her home ready for the Sunday service by scrubbing the wide floor boards, washing the windows until they sparkled, and polishing the heavy furniture. The downstairs bedroom was made ready for the Circuit Bishop, Right Reverend Maurice de St. Palaise, by heating the room with a bucket of hot coals.

The congregation came from all areas of Lake County, some from as far away as Hammond, Indiana. Mrs. Mellon was honored to have the Bishop offer Sunday Mass in her home, but she dreaded the aftermath in rainy seasons. Roads were muddy and a lot of mud was tracked into her home. Consequently, many Sunday afternoons were spent scooping the mud out with a shovel. After the log cabin church was built, Mrs. Mellon, good Christian that she was, still helped to clean up after Sunday Mass.

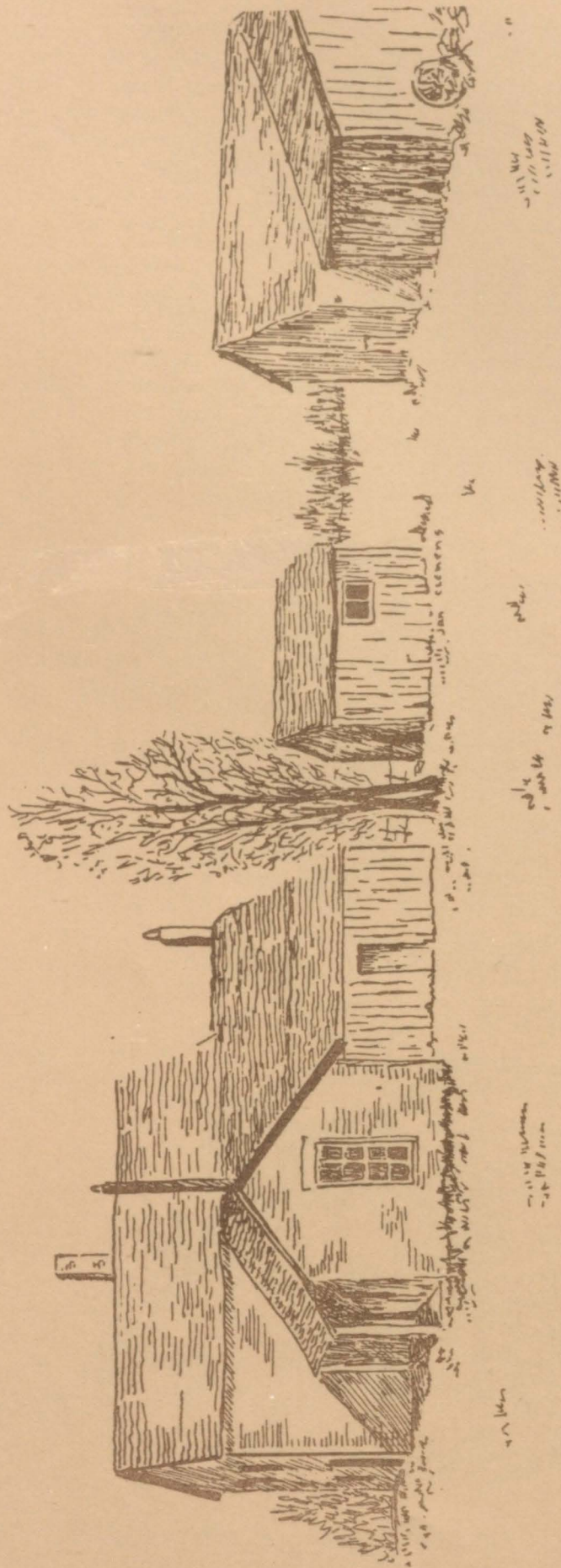
To son, John Mellon, fell the task of keeping a ready supply of wood in the house for use in the fireplace. Clever John, who intensely disliked chopping wood devised a method to eliminate the dreaded chore. His solution was to cut a hole in a wall of the house and shove an uncut log into the opening and onto the fire. The end that was not in the fire was suspended from the ceiling with a long rope and allowed lowering the log into the hearth as the fire burned.

When Dennis Mellon died in 1862, John and his family took over the house and stayed there many years. They were succeeded by Frank Halfman, grandson of Dennis Mellon, who lived there with his wife and 15 children until 1900. Frank rented the home to others until 1915. At that time, he gave possession to his son, John Halfman and his wife, Clara.

In 1930, John and Clara Halfman moved to another house on the same property, and the original home of Dennis Mellon stood vacant. There were to be no more renters or owners. The only occupants were a few chickens who found a good roosting spot on the old fireplace. Eventually, the homestead had to be torn down and the removal of the dwelling allowed the weeds and wild vegetation to reclaim the land and the site of the Mellon ancestral home was once again an open field. John Halfman sold the land to Finnerty Real Estate and the acreage was subdivided.



DENNIS MELLON HOMESTEAD



HARMS - NIKSCH FARM

The Harms-Niksches farm was located on East 73rd Avenue, across the road from the Deep River School.

Edward Niksch, son of German immigrants, married Tillie Harms of Merrillville and assumed the operation of her family's farm. Ed also worked for a time in the brick yards of Hobart and drove a school bus for Ross Township.

Edward and Tillie had four children: Leona married Clifford Carpenter, Laverne married Irene Martine, Donald married Ruth Nagel, and Edward Jr. married Leona Stevens.

RUTH AND DONALD NIKSCH - 1944

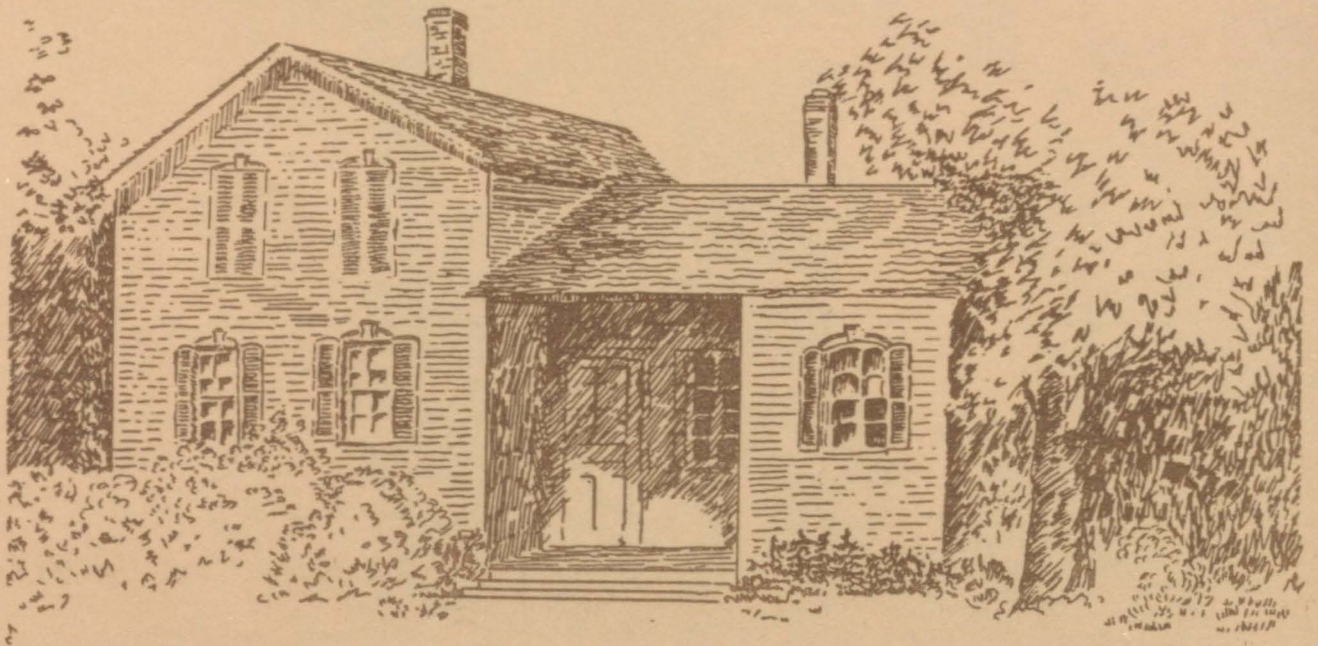


THE NIKSCH FAMILY DRESSED FOR A FAMILY OUTING IN 1929
Clockwise, from Leona, (sitting on bumper), Laverne,
Tillie, Edward Jr., Edward Sr., and Donald

ALBERT BUTTS HOMESTEAD

Albert and Almira (Demmon) Butts came to this area from Vermont in 1837. Accompanying them were Almira's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Demmon, and their other four children including Almira's brother, Julius, who started a veritable dynasty of Demmons in this area.

Albert and Almira settled on a claim a few miles west of Merrillville, where they built the illustrated house circa 1845. However, the house had to be demolished in the mid 1950s. Many of the Butts family descendants still reside in the area.



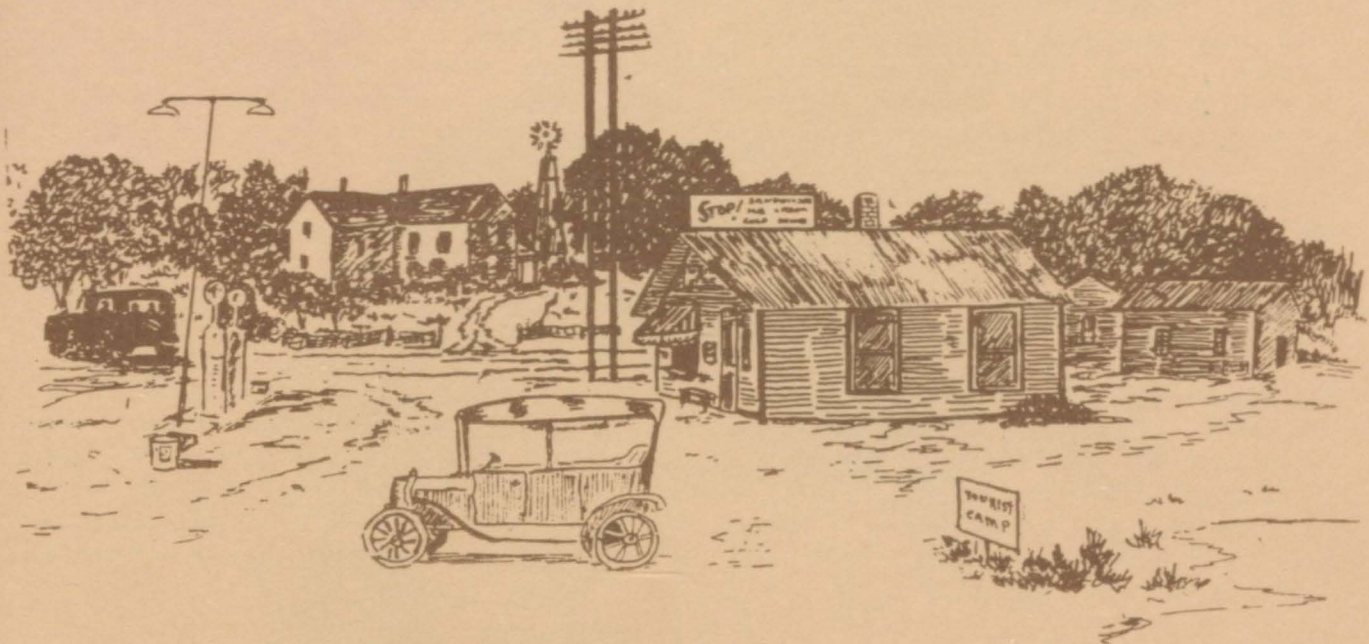
THE ALBERT BUTTS HOMESTEAD

WHITE STAR GAS STATION

The White Star Gas Station was the local hangout that was particularly popular in the 1930s. It was run by Edward Koch and his wife, Frances (Franz) Koch. Frances was also known affectionately as Maude or more simply as Mom. The Kochs operated the gas station for ten years before transferring the management of it over to Edward's brother, Clarence.

The facilities featured a restaurant, a dance floor, and live entertainment which included the Bisselberg Boys Guitar Band. Also provided were cabins for the travel weary patrons. The Friday night fish fries were very well attended and the local residents looked forward to the end of the work week.

A home, belonging to the Demmon family, can be seen in the background of the accompanying illustration.



WHITE STAR GAS STATION AND SWEET SHOP

SHOUP HOUSE

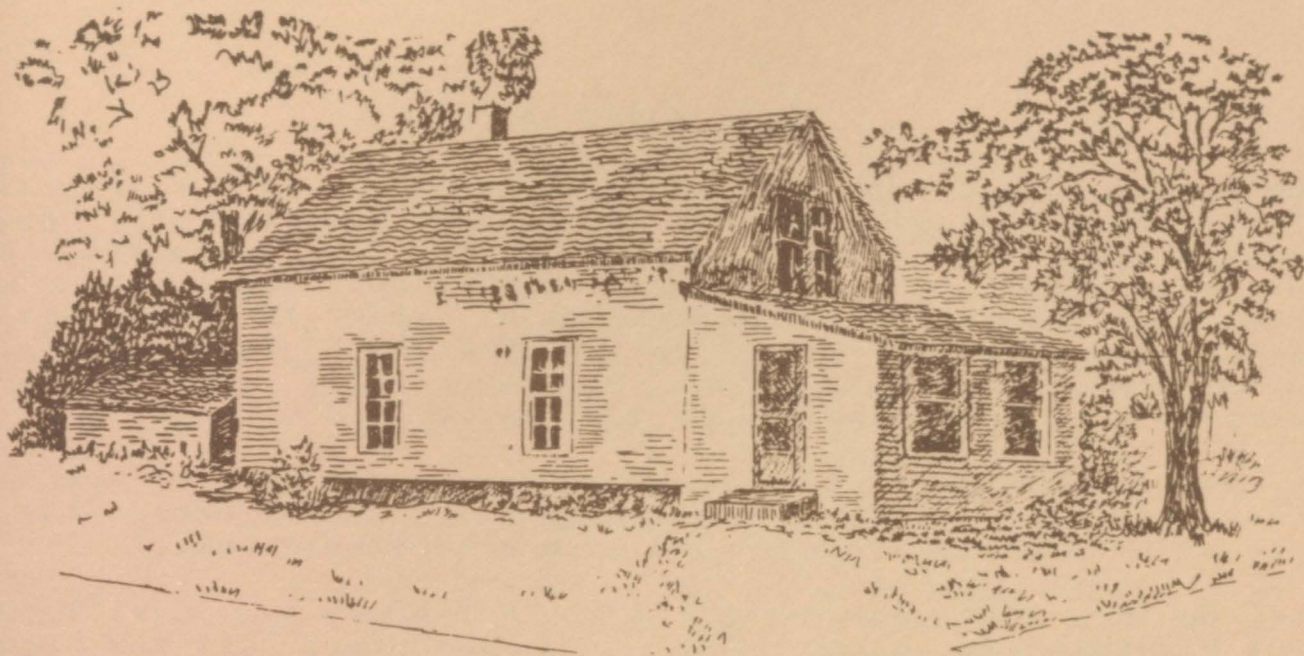
Originally known as the Vaness House (research on this family has not yet been completed), this tiny antiquated cottage was constructed circa 1870. The story and a half, four room dwelling is rumored to be a log cabin under its modern siding. The house has known many renters but it currently is occupied by Mrs. Estella Shoup.

Arthur Shoup, a carpenter who came from Porter County, married Clara Blanch Bothwell, the descendant of an area pioneer family. She was the daughter of Ransom and Geneva (Bahr) Bothwell of Ross Township. Ransom was the son of John and Nancy (Dutton) Bothwell who had come to this area in 1839.

Arthur, Clara and their children lived in the Clifford Pierce home for a time and later moved into the small cabin. While living there, Clara died leaving young children. The older girls rose to the occasion, abandoned their studies and tended to the house. They also took whatever jobs they could find. Neva, for instance, found employment as a "soda jerk" and she and her sister, Vera, worked for a time in the Stoltz Store. The Shoup children, all grown now, certainly did not let their early exposure to life's responsibilities stand in the way of their development into mature adults.

Arthur's second wife, Estella, lives alone in the house which, save for the addition of siding and the enclosing of the porch, has known no changes over the years not even the addition of indoor plumbing. Mrs. Shoup lives quite contentedly without the assistance of modern conveniences.

To some people Estella may be viewed as anachronistic. To others she may seem stubbornly old-fashioned, as one who refuses to give up the security of the old ways for "new fangled" modernities. But, there is yet a third way to view her seeming refusal to change with the times. Could she be part of a vanishing breed, preserving a life style that is near extinction?



SHOUP HOUSE



ARTHUR AND CLARA (BOTHWELL) SHOUP

BOYD HOMESTEAD

The Boyds' history in this area can be traced to the arrival of Elizabeth (Kelly) Boyd, her twin sons, Eli and Levi, and daughter, Sara, in Ross Township in 1848. Elizabeth, a native of Pennsylvania, had married Alex Boyd and the couple made their home in Lucas County, Ohio, where the twins were born. Alex died in 1844 leaving Elizabeth to rear the children alone, a situation she eventually remedied by marrying a man named Marmaduke Bunting.

The family took up residence on a farm north of 73rd Avenue (near what is now I-65) and lived in a log cabin until they were able to build a larger and more comfortable home.

Records show that when the Civil War broke out, Levi Boyd lent his services to the cause. He was part of the 99th Regiment Infantry, Indiana Volunteer, Company A. His compatriots included John and George Merrill, the Pierce brothers, and Hiram Barton. In the fall of 1864, Levi suffered a wound that was to cause him serious back trouble the rest of his life.

Eli married Agnes Hyde in 1874. Levi never married but made his home with Eli, Agnes and their five children--Alex, Warren, Charles, Alice, and George. Short, slim Levi was a welcome addition to the household with his fun-loving ways and kidding nature. He lavished attention on his niece and nephews and provided the perfect contrast for stern, serious Eli, whose very physical presence--tall, thin, high cheek boned--bespoke his "no nonsense" personality.

In their lifetime, Eli and Levi accrued almost 1,000 acres which, upon their deaths (Eli in 1911 and Levi in 1918) was distributed among Eli's children. George was given the old house and the farm. George, a graduate of Northern College in Valparaiso, Indiana, taught at Hurlburt Corners School while he also farmed about 300 acres. He served on the School Advisory Board under Trustees Henry Seifert, Emil Buchfuehrer, and Henry Fieler.

George married Addie Guernsey, daughter of Joe Guernsey of Ross Township. Beautiful Addie, with her fine delicate features and wide expressive eyes, was considered quite a "catch". Her fashion tastes enhanced her classic looks, and her regal poise and bearing impressed everyone. As Mrs. Walter once said, "She stepped out of her surrey dressed like a princess; so neat and dignified."

Lest we think Addie's life was one of dressing up and holding court, it would be pointed out that Addie was an energetic, hardworking woman, quite capable of meeting the demands of being the wife and mother of a prosperous farmer.

The large farm required the efforts of several men and women to keep it running smoothly, so George imported help from Chicago through an employment agency. Having hired help around meant more cleaning and cooking for Addie, as the Boyds fed and housed their workers. It was not uncommon to see 14 to 20 men sitting down to dinner in the Boyd home. Organizing, preparing, and cleaning up after such meals was no small task and Addie handled it as efficiently as did her mother-in-law, Agnes, before her.

Besides Addie's contribution to the management of the farm, she, like George, taught school for a time.

George and Addie were blessed with three children: Lucille, Ellen, and Lenore. Lenore married Harry Calpha and moved to Chicago where she worked as a librarian and Harry taught journalism. During the 20 years the Calphas lived in the Windy City, they journeyed to Merrillville every week-end to visit at the old farm. In 1960, they left Chicago and retired to the Boyd home.

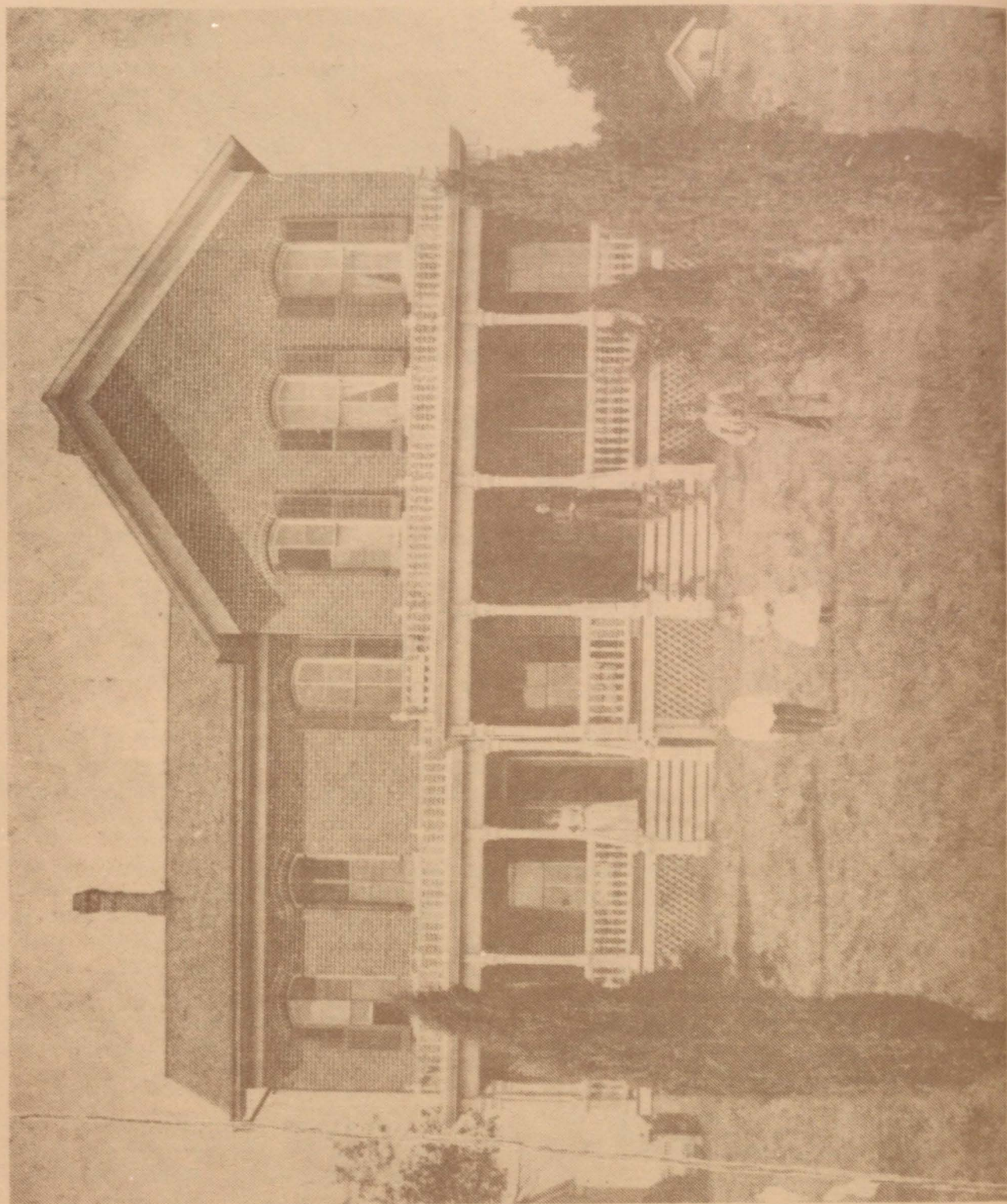
Today, small and slender Lenore, with her husband Harry, live in the 17 room mansion surrounded by mementoes of her ancestors. She is enthusiastic and exuberant and one who fondly reminisces about the simple childhood joys of scrambling up the backstairs and then sliding down the front staircase or about the thrill of learning to drive the 1911 family Ford at the age of twelve.

The Boyd home remains nearly intact except for a few changes to the porch that led to the two front entrances. Originally the house featured a balustrade porch that spanned the front of the house and today the house has a smaller porch.

Built in 1877, the house has an aura of solidity that seems to reflect the strength and character of its occupants. Like many of the houses of that time, it had front and back stairs and large rooms with high ceilings. Unlike other houses of the period, it had running water pumped in from the outside via a windmill. Moreover, the Boyd house could lay claim to having the fanciest outhouse in these parts--boasting plastered walls, carpeting, spacious accommodations, and three holes!!!

The Boyd home is a veritable treasure chest of memories. Each room seems to breathe stories of by-gone days. So little has been changed in recent years that with a little imagination one can visualize the three generations of the Boyds--the twins Levi and Eli (and of course, Agnes), George and Addie, and Lenore and Harry, who have all occupied the house over the last hundred years.

BOYD HOME





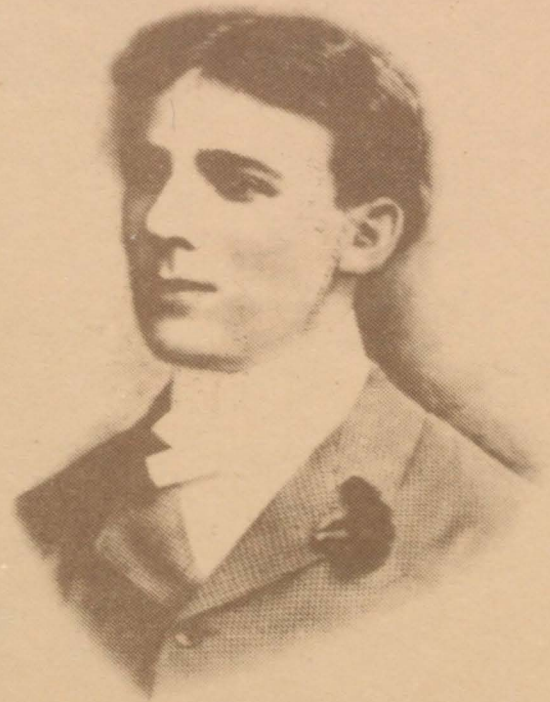
John Elbert and one of the Chester boys
threshing on the Boyd Farm in 1914

All three generations have left their individual imprint on the house, yet there is a sense of permanence, solidity, and timelessness that permeates the house in the roomy parlors with their fine old mirrors, portraits, and furniture. These things, lovingly cared for, inform the visitor that the home, along with the old furnishings, are preserved for future generations with great honor and respect for their ancestors.

The home is still owned by Lenore Calpha and her two sisters, Lucille Solman and Ellen Morris who live in other towns. The sisters represent the fourth generation of Boyds in this area.



ADDIE (GUERNSEY) BOYD



GEORGE BOYD

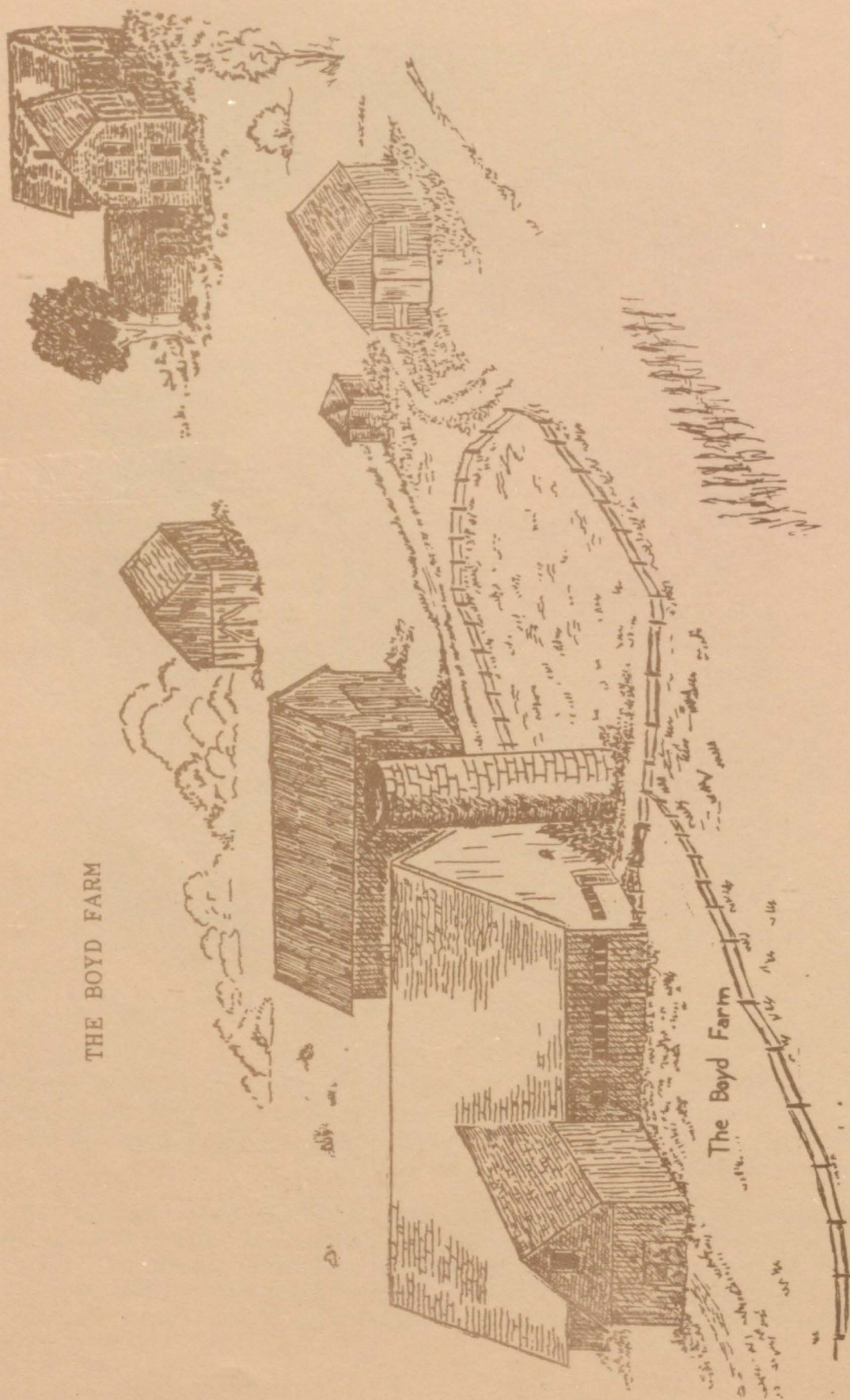


WARREN AND ELIZABETH (SAUTER) BOYD

Warren Boyd, son of Eli and Agnes (Hyde) Boyd, was born in 1885. He attended Valparaiso University and farmed the acreage he inherited north on Mississippi Street, that was the former Perry Goodrich farm.

Warren is pictured above, on his wedding day, April 18, 1904, with his bride Elizabeth (Sauter) who was called Lizzee. She was the daughter of an Ainsworth pioneer family. This photo reveals the quiet dignity that characterizes Warren. He and his wife were the parents of two sons, Elmer and Harold.

THE BOYD FARM





CHARLES AND EDNA BOYD

Charles Boyd (known as Uncle Deck) was born in 1886. He had several occupations during his lifetime, including farmer, auto repairman, and school bus driver. The photo above shows Charles with his wife, Edna (Saxton) Boyd, on their wedding day, April 2, 1907. Edna died in 1929 and Charles married Lydia (Schuett) Kraft in 1931. Lydia was a widow and had a daughter, Elizabeth Kraft who died in 1954.

Charles is remembered for his easy, outgoing manner and for his hard work on behalf of the Republican Party. He was a very active member of the Methodist Church and helped build the rear annex of the present structure.



ALICE (BOYD) HALSTED

The demure young woman in the photo above is Alice Boyd on her graduation day. She married Albert Halsted and, putting her girlhood behind her, assumed the role of a prosperous farmer's wife.

Alice had an appreciation for the finer things in life, including music (she dearly loved to play the piano), and lovely clothes. Her trim figure was a dressmaker's joy and many of her fine garments were handmade. Some of her clothing was purchased in Chicago. Lest we think her penchant for pretty clothes excluded her from hard work, it should be mentioned that Alice cooked for many hired hands on the family's East 73rd Avenue farm. She also took great care of her home and cared for her daughter, Jean.

Jean was a devoted daughter and was a comfort during Alice's advancing years. Alice passed away November 20, 1974.

THE PALMER HOUSE

Approximately three miles west of Broadway in Merrillville on a slope overlooking the Old Lincoln Highway (now 73rd Avenue) stands an old house that is historically important because it was the home of Dr. Henry Palmer, the first licensed physician in Lake County, Indiana.

The home, though historically significant, has been so extensively remodeled and altered that little of its original architectural character remains. Among the changes made were the addition of brick asbestos siding, the simplification of the window styling (the rounded window tops are now square), the removal of the rear addition, and the removal of the outbuildings and windmill.

The illustration accompanying this chronicle depicts the dwelling in its original state. The two-story frame dwelling shelters a small attic beneath its gabled roof and has a cellar of small storage cells beneath the ground floor. The entrance on the lateral side of the house, facing the road, had a small porch which today is larger in size and has been enclosed.

Dr. Palmer was born, reared, and educated in New York. He studied medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons and graduated in 1832. Shortly after graduation, he married Harriet (Cady) Palmer and they had two children. He spent five years practicing medicine in Oneida Castle, New York. After hearing stories about the new frontier in the Midwest he was enticed to pack up his family and their belongings and journey to the open country. The long and tedious journey ended two miles west of the infant town of Wiggins Point (now Merrillville, Indiana). A tired family, a cracked wagon wheel, and the beauty of the area were instrumental in Dr. Palmer choosing Ross Township as the family's new home.

Soon Dr. Palmer established a large and lucrative practice. His rides to pioneer homes included Crown Point, St. John, Hobart, Lake Station, and sometimes Hammond. He was a friend of the poor as well as the wealthy, looking upon his position as a way of helping his fellow man rather than enriching himself. The early pioneers paid him for his services with grain, eggs, chickens, corn, and cheese. He was devoted to his practice and carried out the duties and responsibilities of his profession with the greatest ability. In 1876, failing health caused him to put aside his stethoscope and retire from active practice.

His wife, Harriet, died in 1841, leaving an infant daughter and a seven year old son. Through the years without his wife, hired help and neighbors assisted him in the care of his two small children. Then, in 1854, Dr. Palmer married Katherine (Underwood). She presented him with three children who lived to adulthood: Hattie, Wilbur, and Alice who married Christian Fieler. Mr. and Mrs. Fieler lived on his farm east of Crown Point, Indiana, where their son, Henry, was born. Hattie and Wilbur Palmer did not marry.

After Dr. Palmer's death, Katherine lived for a short time on the farm. She then moved the family to the west side of Chicago where the children received part of their education. About the turn of the century, Mrs. Palmer and daughter, Alice, moved back to the farm. When Alice married Christian Fieler in 1901, Katherine turned the operation of the farm over to him. In 1917, Alice passed away and Mr. Fieler moved to the Palmer farm and, with the help of hired couples, operated the farm until he died in 1937.

When Henry Fieler married Agnes (Severance) they moved into a small house located on U. S. 30, west of Taft Street and lived there for ten years until they moved to the Palmer farm. When his father, Christian, died he ran the farm until it was subdivided for further development. In 1949 Henry and Agnes once again moved to U. S. 30 and their present home is still located on original Palmer land.

Henry has been active in civic affairs. His years as a Township Trustee were held in such high esteem that the Town of Merrillville honored him by naming a school after him. The Henry P. Fieler Elementary School is located on 61st Avenue, one half mile west of Broadway. Henry also finds time for the Knights Templar, Masons, and serves as an active member of the Ross Township Historical Society, which is sponsoring this publication.

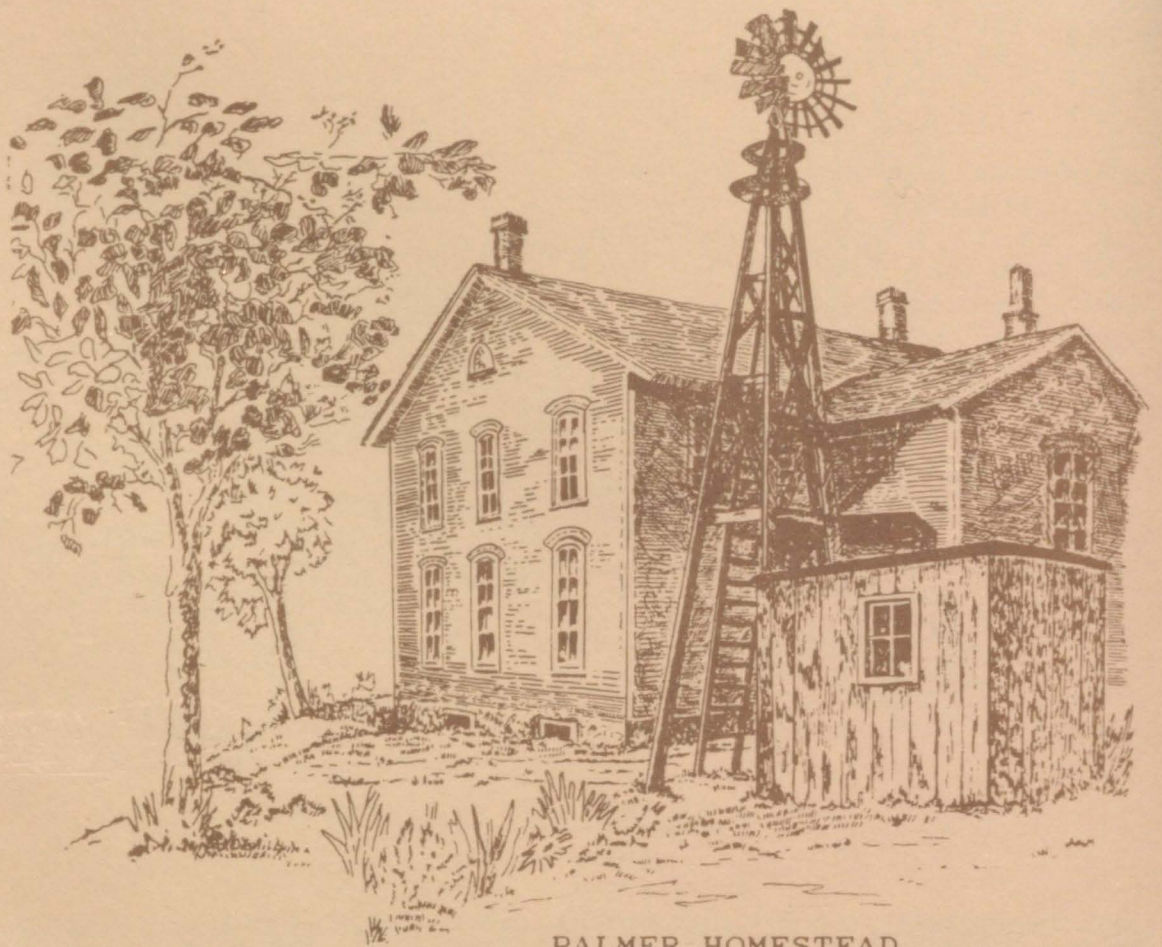
Henry and Agnes had five children: Henry Christian (Hobart, Indiana), Alyce Lorraine Kaiser (Wanatah, Indiana), Agnes Jayne Lukens (Elkhart, Indiana), Robert George (deceased), and Richard Arthur (Nottingham, New Hampshire).



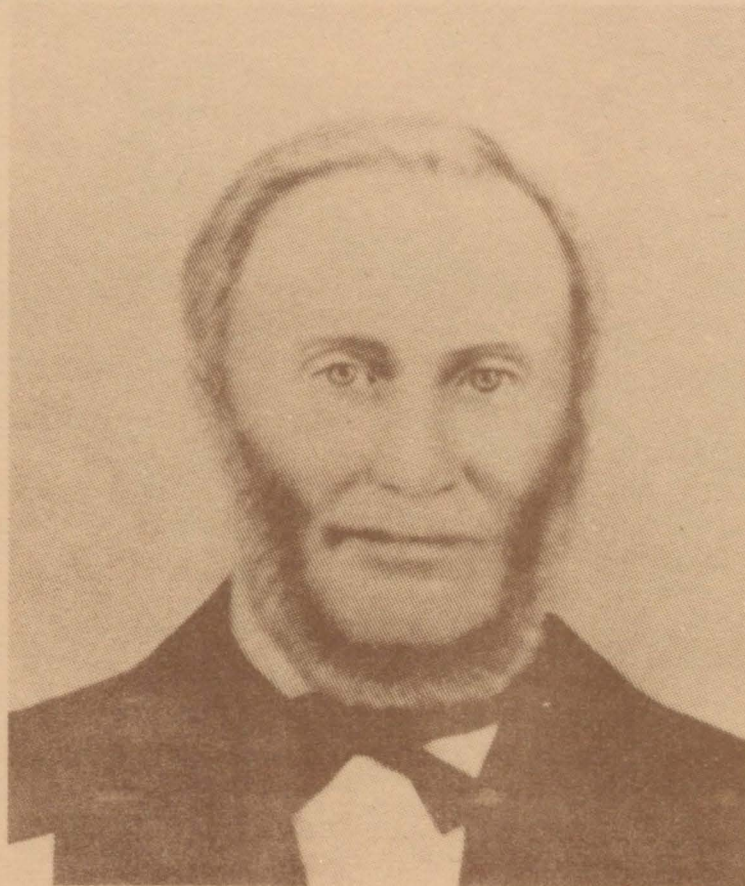
ALICE PALMER IN THE PALMER HOUSE



HATTIE AND KATHERINE (UNDERWOOD) PALMER
(Daughter and mother)



PALMER HOMESTEAD



DR. HENRY PALMER

CHARLES DEMMON FARM

The two-story, spacious frame house, built by Charles Demmon and Ella (Bay) Demmon, represents another link in a long chain of Demmon residences. This nine room house, built in 1875, was located on a former wagon path currently known as Cleveland Street. The structure, removed in 1972, was western in style with its rambling lateral wing and double porches.

Charles, son of Julius Demmon, was born in 1850, and was reared to farm life. When he got a spread of his own in the form of a gift of 110 acres from his father, he applied himself to farming for quite some time until he turned his attention to butchering. Moving his family to Griffith, Indiana, Charles worked at meat cutting for three years and discovered that he missed farming much more than he had anticipated. He then abandoned his new found career and returned to his first love, working the land.

Charles and Ella (Bay) were blessed with ten children--two sons and eight daughters. Lest anyone think that the couple would have done better to have a few more able-bodied sons to help with the chores, rest assured that the girls did their share of the farm work. Two of the Demmon children made Ross Township their home for all of their lives, namely daughter Lucille, (who married George Franz), and son George (now deceased). George's widow, Nellie (Guernsey) Demmon, lives on Catherine Street with her daughter, Ella (Demmon) Deppe.

The Demmon farm has long since been divided and parceled out. In fact, the former Gary Country Club (now Innsbrook Country Club) bought part of the Demmon land.

Today the house is but a memory and the many descendants are scattered throughout the area.



CHARLES AND ELLA (BAY) DEMMON FARM

THE OLD MILL

This structure has the singular honor of being the oldest business building still standing in Merrillville, and its history is as rich as it is long. The Old Mill was erected in 1851 as a distillery. John and Elizabeth Law are reputed to have been the operators of the distillery which supplied liquor to many inns and saloons in Lake County, Indiana.

In those days, Merrillville was widely known for the stills that abounded throughout the township and for the quality of the "spirited" liquid they produced. Some of our townsmen, being enthusiastic supporters of the various brews and their "side effects", partook too frequently and in injudicious quantities of the intoxicating products available at the saloon and at the mill, inviting the contempt of the more temperate residents of the town.

Temperance Union members would peer disgustedly through nearly closed curtains at the inebriated men who stumbled down the steps of the old saloon and staggered down the wooden sidewalk to their long-suffering mates. Many a family had endured the benumbing influence that the alcohol had on the head of their household.

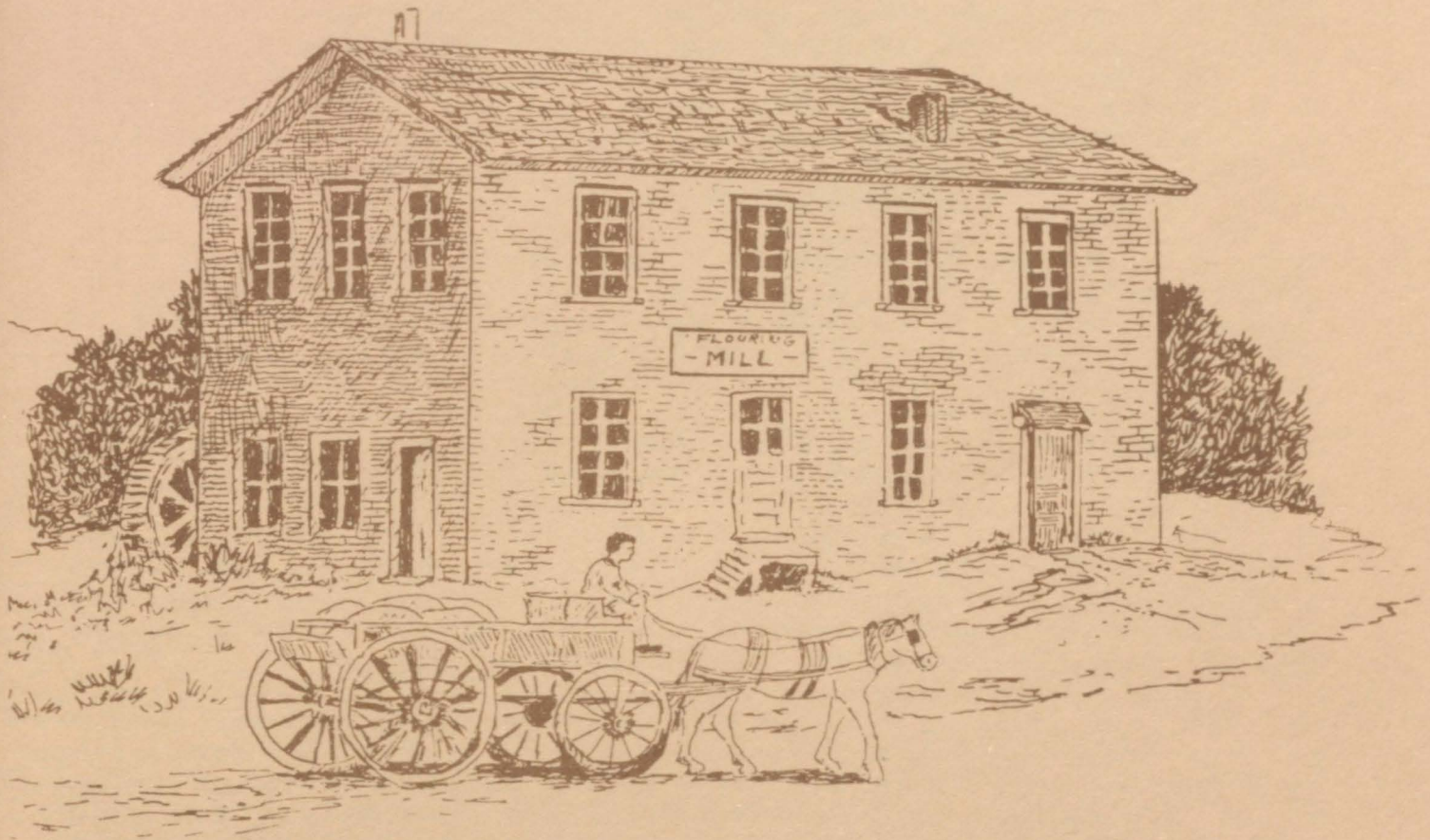
In 1854, the Old Mill became a respectable, and perhaps less interesting, addition to the community when it was changed over to, of all things, a steam mill for grinding wheat into flour. After several years of operation, including some under the management of David and Candice Moore, the mill was closed only to be opened in the same capacity a few years later.

In 1884, John Berens, a town miller of long standing, rented the mill and updated the operation by replacing the steam engine with a gas engine, the first to be used in Ross Township. Some years later, when John found it expedient to relocate, the mill underwent several changes of owners as well as changes of function.

For a long period of time it was owned by J. and Harriet Tierney, who operated it as a tavern, restaurant, dance hall, and at one point, as a candy store. Under the Tierneys' management, the Mill became a real showplace and featured high caliber cuisine that attracted customers from all over. It was not uncommon for them to cater to large groups and professional organizations from Chicago. The Friday night fish dinners are particularly well remembered.

The Old Mill reportedly was also used for a school when it wasn't milling, distilling, or feeding the hungry. The Mill was once again a restaurant when Tony and Sally Mazzaro ran it and it is currently a pizzeria and tavern under the name of Roma's Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge. It is owned by Robert Barton, a pharmacist at the Turkey Creek Pharmacy and it is his intention to operate it as a pharmacy.

Thus, the Mill has run the gamut of operations from candy store, to tavern, to gristmill, to restaurant, and from institution of learning to a pizza parlor.



THE OLD MILL

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The first Catholic Mass in Merrillville was offered in 1841 in the confines of a log cabin. The celebrant was a visiting priest who would periodically return to the settlement to conduct the services for the appreciative congregation. This situation was a far cry from the present state of affairs wherein several Masses are available on Sundays as well as daily Mass. At this writing there are four priests tending to the spiritual needs of the community from weddings to baptisms, to funerals, and various other liturgies.

In the mid 1850s these services were not performed with any kind of regularity and the occasions were saved up, as it were, until the circuit Bishop made his tri-monthly (or maybe even semi-annually or longer) appearance. These infrequent visits created some circumstances which, at first glance, might be cause for consternation. For instance, it was not uncommon for a couple to be married without benefit of the clergy, then upon the arrival of the priest, the union would be solemnized with a nuptial Mass. Not too infrequently, the interval between visits was such that the date of the baptism of the couple's firstborn was entered into the church records before the date of the nuptial Mass.

For ten years various members volunteered their homes for the holding of services. In 1851, under the direction of Rev. B. J. Voors C.S.C., a log church was constructed on the site of the present cemetery (56th and Delaware Street), on land that was donated by the Dennis Mellon family. At that point in time, the settlement was still regarded as a Mission, and as such, depended on visits from Holy Cross priests from Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana.

The first baptism was that of John Adler, son of John and Margarita (Plum) Adler on January 17, 1850. The first marriage was celebrated On February 24, 1851 uniting Sebastian Gasper and Margretha Muller. The first funeral was that of George Hoffman on April 23, 1852.

By 1858, the congregation had grown to such a degree that a resident pastor was named and the Rev. Philip Wegemeyer assumed the role as head of St. John the Baptist Church as it was called then. Parishioners travelled many miles from such communities as Hobart, Lake Station and Tolleston among others.

Under the parish's second pastor, Rev. M. Paul Wehrle, a flagstone structure was erected in 1863 on the site that is the present day location of the church, 5855 Harrison Street. This land was donated by Peter Fox and it would appear that the name of the church was changed to Saints Peter and Paul Church as a tribute to the two men instrumental in its construction.

Over the next 25 years, the congregation was under the spiritual guidance of eight different priests. The next building to be constructed was a residence for the School Sisters of Notre Dame. During the years from 1902 to 1905 the parish once again had the status of a Mission and was under the administration of Rev. Thomas F. Jansen of Hobart, Indiana.

It was Father Jansen who went to the Mother House of the Notre Dame Sisters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to ask for teaching sisters for the parish in "Turkey Creek" as it was sometimes called. When Father Jansen was informed that none were available, he retired to the chapel where he fasted and prayed until he was called out and given a promise that two teachers and a homemaker nun would be sent to Indiana. In the meantime, the women of the parish, confident in Father Jansen's persuasive powers, had been very busy furnishing the convent. When the sisters arrived, they found their living quarters comfortably appointed, freshly painted, and well stocked with linens.

More construction activity took place during Rev. Frederick Koenig's pastorate from 1905 to 1936. These years saw the building of the red brick school in 1906, and a new convent in 1910. In 1916, a red brick church with twin steeples replaced the stone church on the very same site. The frugality of the parishioners was evidenced by crushing the stones from the old church and using it as an ingredient in the mortar for the new red bricks.

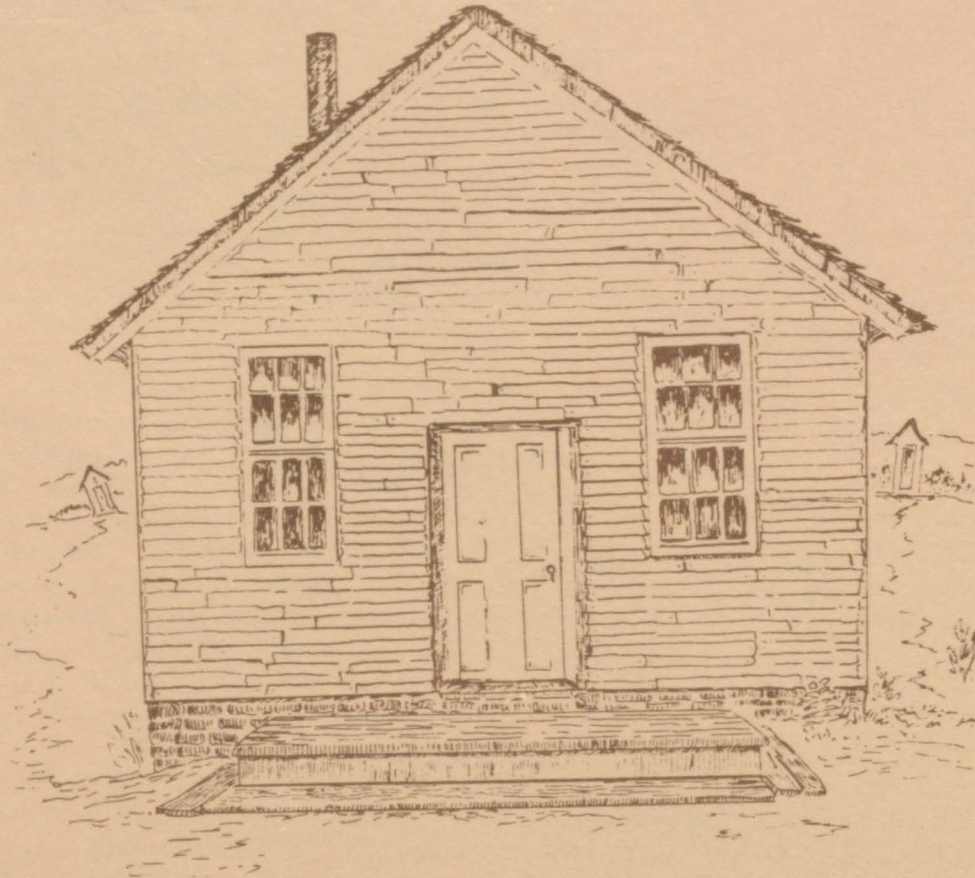
A new rectory was constructed in 1930 and is still in use at this writing. In 1955 a large school was constructed under the guidance of Rev. John Beckman and in 1975 the old brick school was gutted by fire rendering it a complete loss.

The first class to graduate was comprised of five students; the enrollment reached a peak in 1965 with a total of 1,002 students housed in 24 classrooms--three per grade level. A library and a gymnasium (named Fidelis Hall after Mother Fidelis Krieter, SSND, a daughter of the parish) were built in the 1960s.

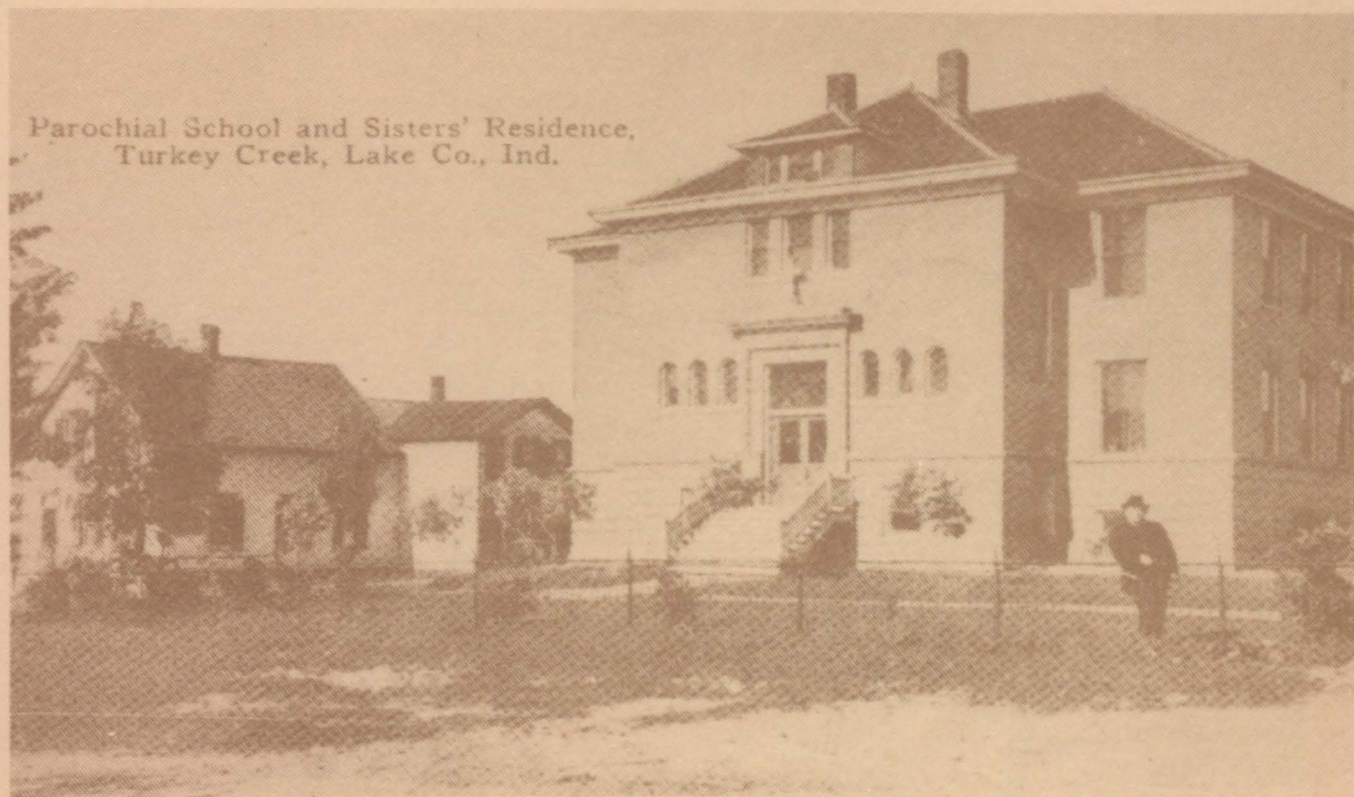
Prior to the building of the red brick school, the Ross Township Trustee had made arrangements for a schoolhouse to be built on the southwest corner of 57th Avenue and Harrison Street. This was constructed on land leased from John G. Hoffman and was a one-room building. The Trustee paid the salaries of the teachers (who at that time were young women, graduates of Saint Francis Academy in Joliet, Illinois) but left the hiring to the pastor in charge. The school was inspected by a Mr. Cooper from Crown Point, Indiana.

The Catholic congregation in Merrillville had grown to such a degree in the 1960s that several new parishes were formed. They are: St. Stephen, the Martyr; St. Joan of Arc; St. Andrew; and Our Lady of Consolation.

Saints Peter and Paul Church has been a source of solace and strength for the thousands of Catholic townspeople who reside in Merrillville today. Over the years, parishioners have worshipped in private homes made from logs, the first log church, the stone church, and now the red brick church. Their faith has been made stronger under the guidance of the many priests who have unselfishly served the congregation.



ONE ROOM CATHOLIC SCHOOLHOUSE - TURKEY CREEK
(Was located at 57th Avenue and Harrison Street)

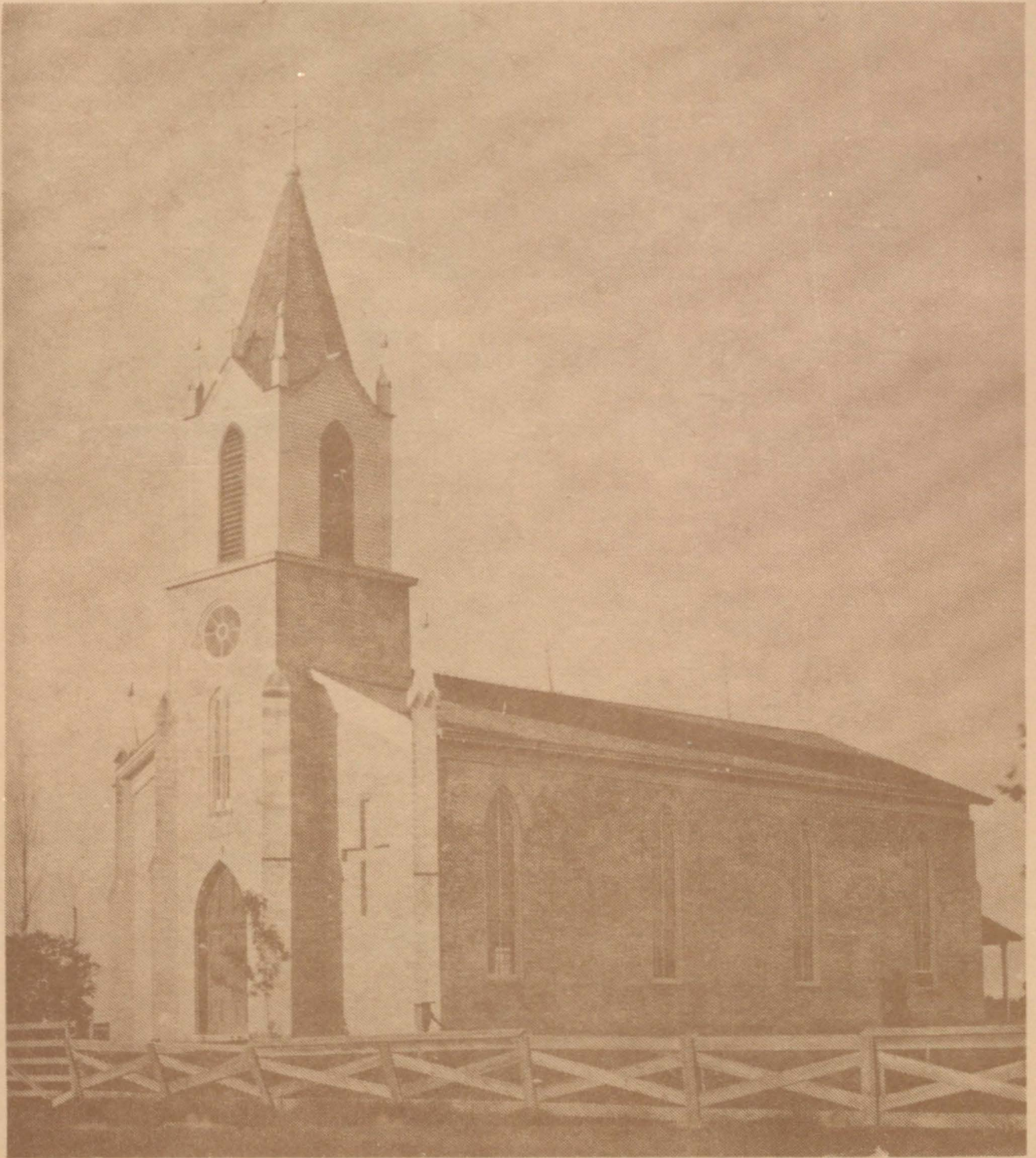


Parochial School and Sisters' Residence,
Turkey Creek, Lake Co., Ind.

PAROCHIAL SCHOOL WITH REV. FREDERICK KOENIG
SISTERS' RESIDENCE TO THE LEFT OF SCHOOL



PRIESTS' RESIDENCE
SS. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH



SS. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH (stone)
1863



SS. PETER AND PAUL CHURCH (brick)
1916

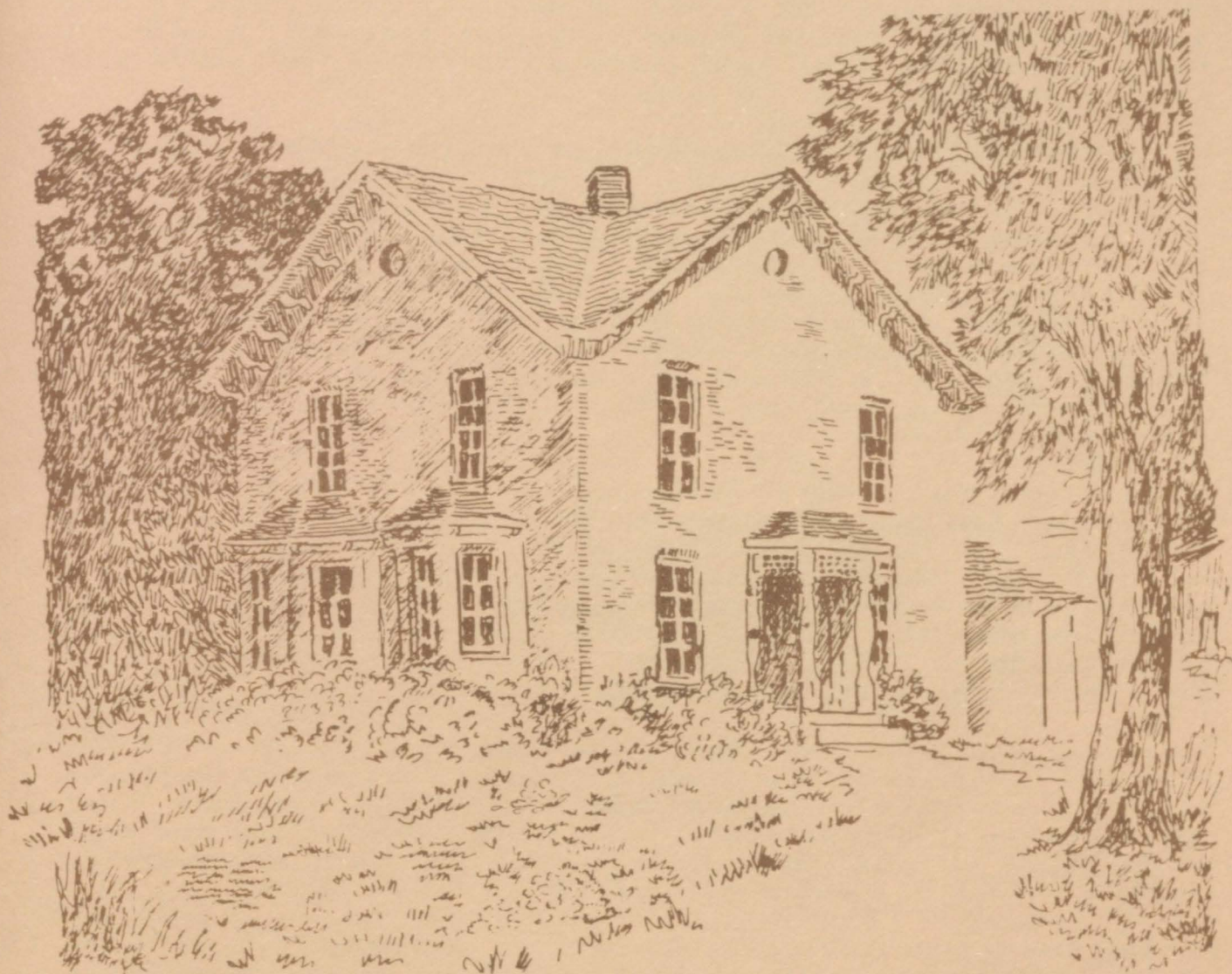
SYKES HOME

The approach to the Sykes home is rather dramatic. After passing a wide expanse of farmland, one encounters a thick grove of trees that hides the house until the last second when the two-story brick structure looms up and totally captures one's attention. The four-gabled house, with its twin bay windows on the front exposure and small portico on the side, is Italianate in design and bespeaks its owner as a person of wealth and position.

The house was built circa 1875 to become the residence of the Charles Sykes family. Charles, a native New Yorker, born in 1818, brought his wife, Susan, to this area between 1853 and 1855. The couple had ten children, some of whom were born in New York, and had made the trip with their parents. The eldest, Rebecca, died at the age of twenty-four in 1866.

The Sykes family was intimately associated with other well-to-do and influential families in the area, most notably with the Haywards. The two families became in-laws twice over when George Hayward won the hand of Mary Sykes, and again when William Sykes claimed Amanda Hayward as his bride.

The century-old home is part of a large farm that, complete with outbuildings, still survives today. Unlike many of the old farms, the former Sykes acreage has not been subdivided and parceled out. The farm is located at the corner of 61st Avenue and Colorado Street or near what used to be called Adams Crossing. The Sykes children attended the nearby Adams School. Today, the descendants of the Sykes family are scattered throughout the area and the farm now belongs to surviving relatives of the Shultz family.



SYKES FARMHOUSE

DEMMON STORE

The long, narrow building constructed of blocks with some brickwork, was built by Walter Demmon in 1924, son of John and grandson of Julius Demmon. Walter operated a grocery store in the building and competed for the local trade with the Stoltz family.

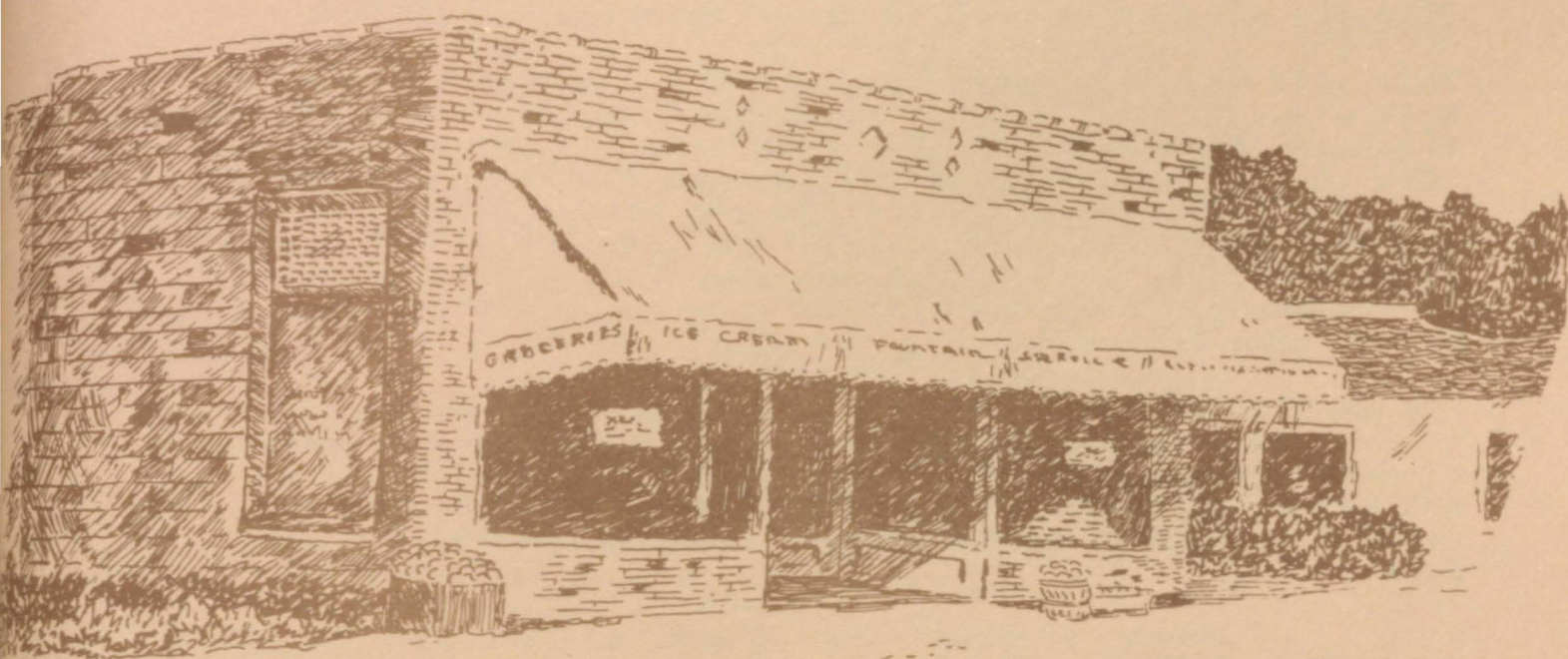
Walter was a farmer but had retired to operate the store. He purchased and lived in the former residence of Dudley Merrill. Later, after building a new home, he rented the old Merrill home. He built his store building several lots from the Merrill home, adjacent to his new home, near Broadway on 73rd Avenue. This location proved to be a real hub of activity. The train station was behind his building, and a gas station, run by Art Boldt, was nearby. Cars, which had not yet acquired a necessity status, had to be serviced periodically and were well on their way from being new-fangled novelties.

Besides being a retail establishment, Walter's store had restaurant facilities and was more aptly described as an ice cream parlor. Many young people made the awning-fronted building their "hangout" because it was just across the street from the school. Neva Shoup, sixteen years of age, who lived down the street, next to the Methodist Church, in her capacity as "soda-jerk" kept the customers satisfied with her repertoire of ice cream delights.

For those who required more substantial nourishment or who were not devotees of ice cream's sweet, cold enchantment, (a situation not many of us can imagine), Walter operated a hot dog stand outside the store. The aroma of sizzling hot dogs no doubt lured many a motorist to the stand for a satisfying lunch of a hot dog and a cold drink.

During the Depression years it was not uncommon for down-on-their-luck men to visit the store in search of a handout. Good hearted Walter gave them a meal and something extra to take with them to sustain them on their way.

Walter was married to Tillie Schnabel (daughter of another prominent family) and they had two children: Leslie, who died in an auto accident in 1933, and Keith. A member of the fourth generation of Demmons in Ross Township, Keith married Mabel Hendricks and the couple made their home in the house Walter had built adjacent to the store. Keith took over the operation of the store after Walter's death and ran it for many years until modern super markets all but made his enterprise obsolete. The store finally closed its doors in 1972 and Keith lives in retirement on Demmon property. His daughter, Jean Yaros, a fifth generation Demmon, resides in the historical Merrill-Demmon house that Walter had once occupied.



DEMMON STORE

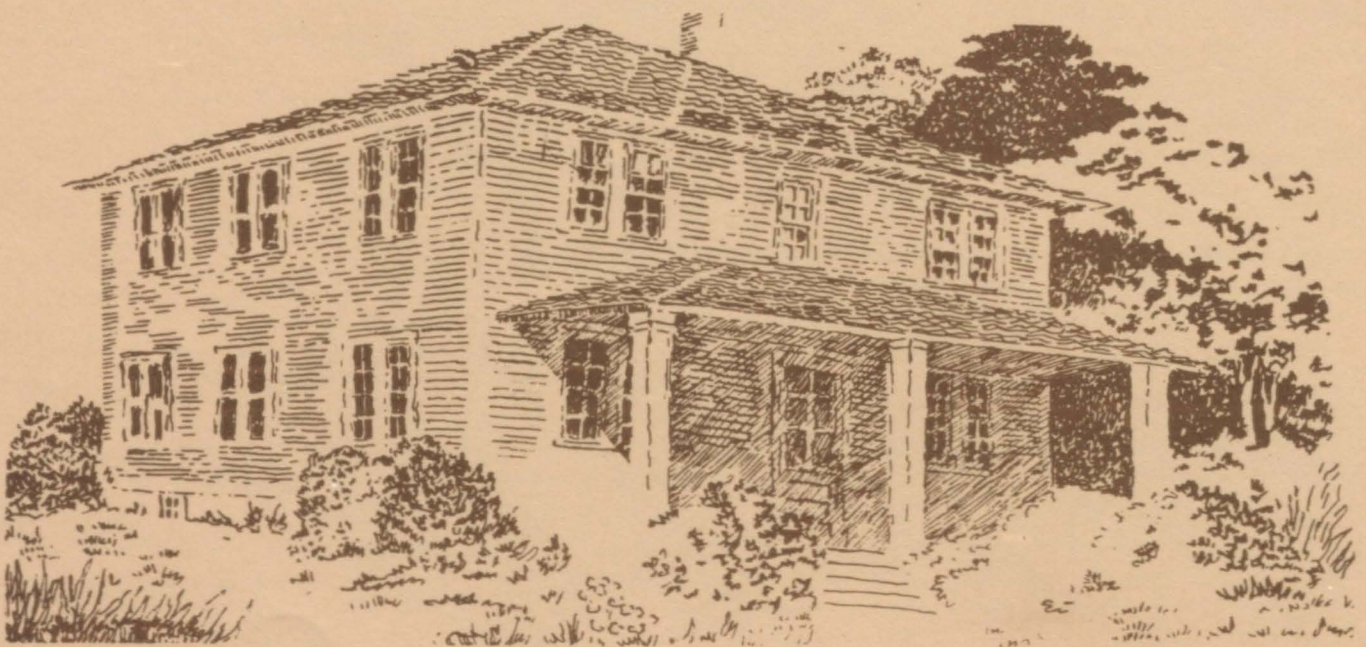
GRUEL ESTATE

The Gruel estate is located on a beautiful, wooded, curving road in an atmosphere that breathes serenity. The number and the immensity of the buildings on the grounds bespeak the wealth of the owner, John Gruel. John, a native of Germany, came here in 1873 and claimed Louise Nickel of Ross Township as his bride. He bought 120 acres of land and parlayed his efforts into an estate that eventually required guards at its fenced borders. At one time helicopters were employed to drop the monthly payroll to the farm below.

This self-made man operated a lucrative dairy business. More milk went out on wagons to be shipped by rail to Chicago, Illinois, from his farm than from any other in the area. A log, narrow barn, 36 feet wide and 90 feet long, gabled roof, square windows spanning its length, and multiple entrances was used to house the dairy cows. Mr. Gruel had two other large barns, taller but not as long, with two extra silos. The farm also had the usual assortment of outbuildings including a springhouse.

The simple, but well constructed two-story house in which his twelve children (six boys and six girls) were raised is situated near a long drive that branches off the main road. Featuring a hipped roof with a porch in the center of the front, the house is near a wagon path that allowed traffic to pass.

Today, the Gruel property is known as the U. S. Steel Supervisors' Club. The home now stands empty and forlorn amid the activity of the club.



GRUEL HOME

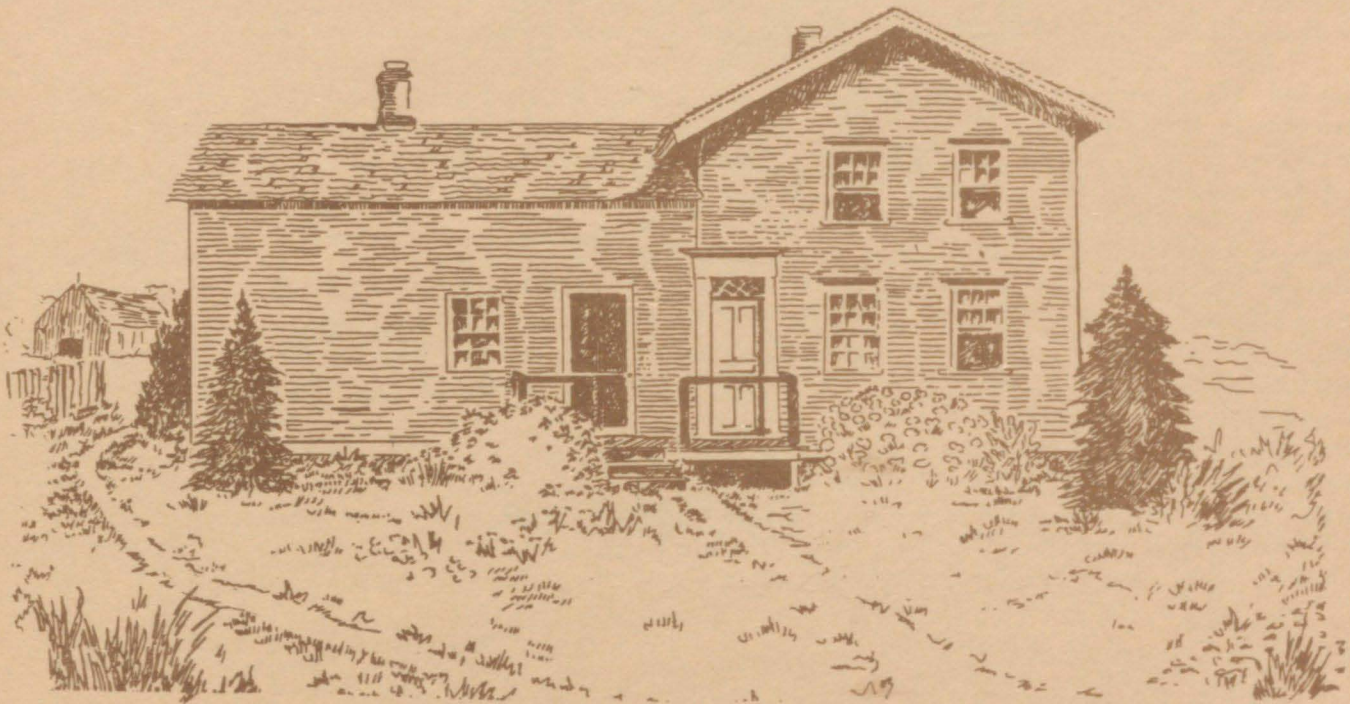
WEHNER HOUSE

Andrew Wehner, who came to the area from Germany in 1854, built a two-story house that is situated on a street that runs east of Cleveland Street and south of the Grand Trunk Railroad on land that was purchased from the government.

Andrew wed Anna Hoffman, daughter of George Hoffman, and they were the parents of five children: John, Michael, Anna, Theresa, and Margaret. For a while Andrew was in charge of the Post Office he operated from his home.

When son John married Whilamene (Hartmann) of Crown Point they resided at the old homestead where John farmed for several years. Their four children, Marcella, Lawrence, Ray, and Edward were all born in the house. Marcella, now Mrs. Frank Shapley, relates how her father used to tell her about the cold winters and how the old stove and the many quilts would keep the family warm. The quilts provided protection against the snow as the white flakes would filter through the cracks in the walls.

Once upon a time the house faced open fields and meadows. Today, the main entrance is on the opposite side of the house and fronts an exclusive subdivision, Brookwood. The modest house cost \$300 back in the last half of the 19th century and today, after much altering and remodeling, it is worth many times that amount.



ANDREW AND ANNA WEHNER HOME

SILAS ZUVERS

Solomon Zuvers came to this area with his father, Amos, in 1836 and was one of the first settlers in the township.

Amos was a rugged man who preferred trapping, trading, and traveling with the friendly Potawatomi Indians and rejected a lot of the comforts of the white man's civilization. From little on, Solomon adapted to his father's ways and was not much dismayed by the relative lack of a formal education. "Twas no matter" for Solomon was schooled in the ways of the wilderness.

In 1848, Solomon succumbed to a case of "gold fever" and left his bride, Sabrina (Hall) to fend for herself while he and his father, Amos, sought the treasured mineral in California. Father and son crossed the country on foot, a journey that took several months. When they returned, they invested some of their profits in the construction of a two-story, four room log cabin built by Mathias Elbert. In later years, green siding obscured the log walls of the dwelling.

Sabrina and Solomon had two sons, Silas and Eugene. Silas was a character in his own right and did not take after his father nor his grandfather. Silas took advantage of the educational opportunities that were available and attended the log school that was located near 73rd and Broadway. He held education in such high regard and eventually became a teacher. Many Merrillville residents received their early instruction from Silas when he taught at several area schools including the Witheral District School on 93rd Avenue.

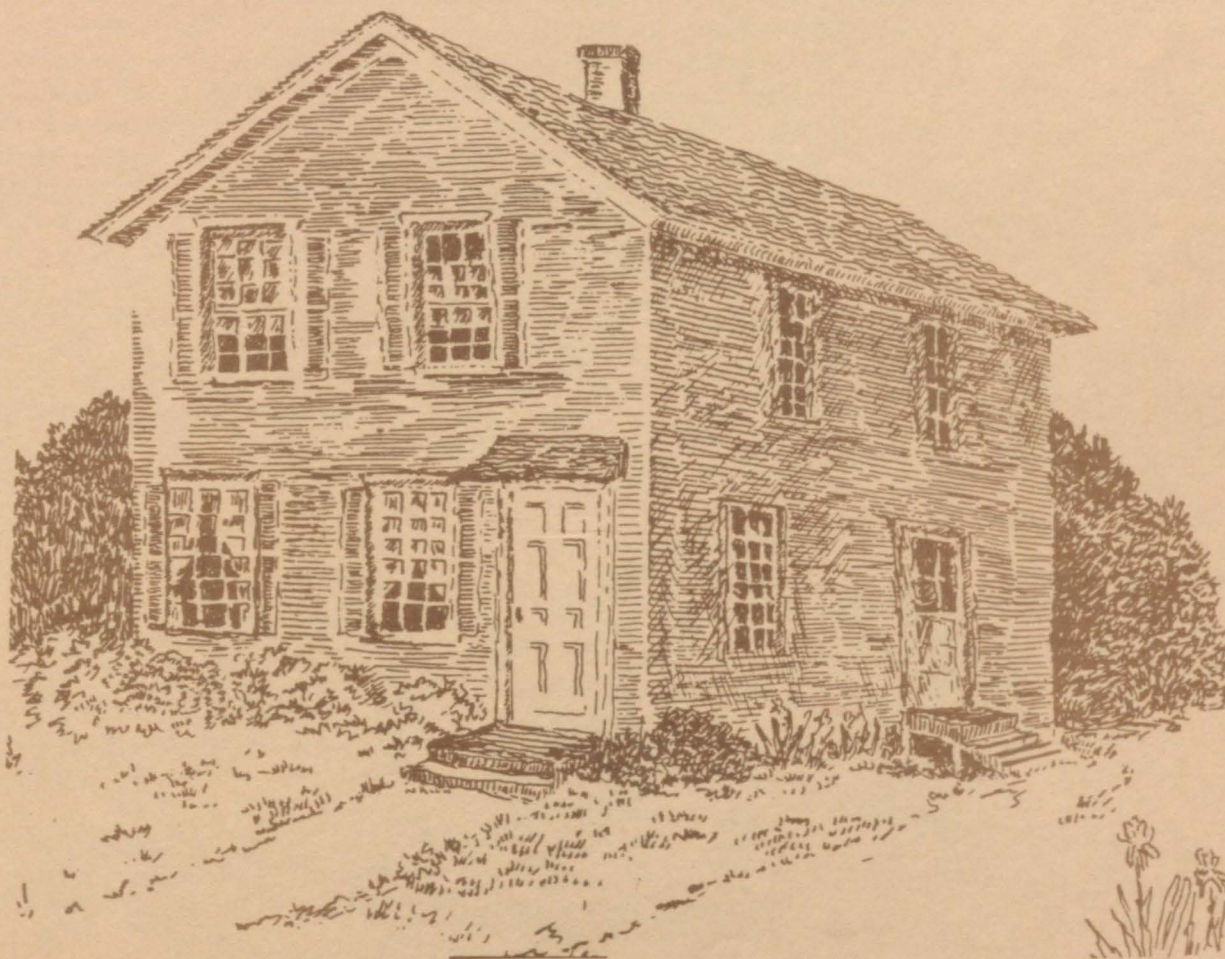
Like the man, Silas's house was unpretentious. The long, narrow house was built with a gable projecting toward the street, but the building lacked the lateral wing that characterized so many homes in the area.

The exact year of construction of the house is uncertain but many believe it was built between 1890 and 1900, a decade that was marked by a flurry of building activity. Except for a front door being removed and the exterior being covered with asbestos siding, the house is virtually unchanged.

Silas carried mail on horseback between Crown Point, Indiana, and Merrillville and later became the local Postmaster. He was assisted by his wife, Lydia (Barton) Zuvers when the post office was located in their home. Patrons entered through a door that was relocated to the east side of the building.

Silas is remembered for the dedication he brought to his life's pursuits as well as his personality. He was eccentric in appearance and behavior. He carried a cane but did not use it as an aid in walking despite the fact he had a peg-leg from the knee down. No, he carried the cane because he felt it conferred an air of authority upon him. He was also an inveterate tobacco chewer whose aim was so accurate that he is reputed to have been able to hit a spittoon clear across the room without fail.

Silas never achieved the business acumen or the polish of his contemporaries Dudley Merrill or Marion Pierce. This pioneer son, nevertheless, enriched the community in his own way through his interest in educating the town's young people enabling them to obtain the means of improving their lot in life and exceeding their parents' accomplishments.



SILAS ZUVERS HOUSE

KRIETER-HALFMAN

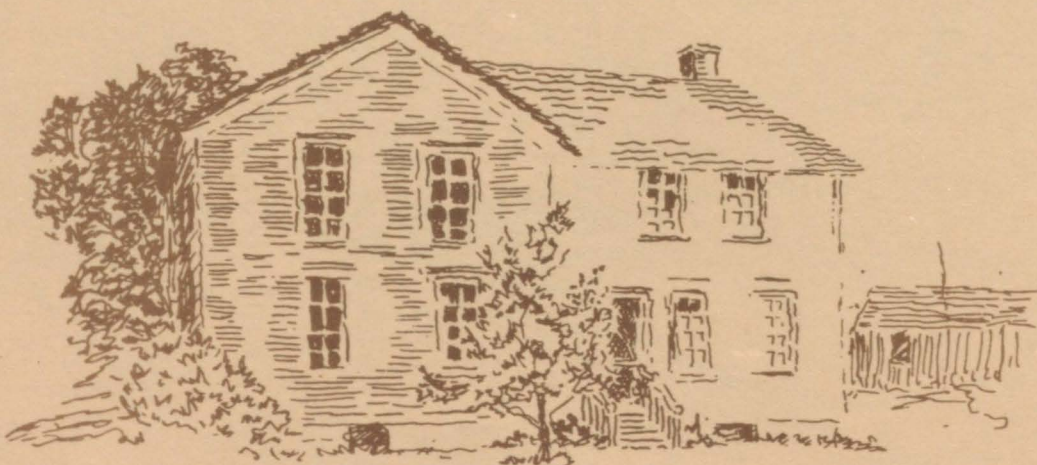
The Krieter-Halfman house was located on a large tract of land situated between Broadway and Georgia Street, just east of the present day McDonald's Restaurant. The two-story, narrow frame house was built in 1865 by a Mr. Koch, and was purchased in 1882 by Jacob Krieter, a German immigrant who came to this area the year before.

Jacob's eldest son, Fred, settled in Ross Township in 1871 and had written to his father telling of the promising future for the family in this country. With this in mind, and with the threat of the German government someday pressing his other offspring into military service, Jacob came to America with his wife and children in 1881.

Jacob and his family resided in the small home for many years and after he retired, his son, Frank, and his young bride occupied the dwelling until Frank was able to purchase his own farm next to his brother Fred's property on 57th Avenue. At that time, 57th Avenue was called Krieter Road.

In 1900, Frank and Amelia (Krieter) Halfman (daughter of Jacob Krieter) purchased the property. They had previously resided on the Dennis Mellon farm (see Mellon story), where seven of their children were born. Eight more children were born in the Krieter-Halfman house, two of whom, Margaret and Helen now reside in Crown Point, Indiana. Frank added the right wing of the house in 1903 and the house contained five large rooms: three bedrooms on the second floor and a bedroom and huge dining room on the first floor. The dining room table was so large it seated the 17 members of the family for three daily meals with room to spare.

Upon his retirement, Frank sold the house in 1935 and the new owner had it moved to a new location. During this process the dwelling was damaged to such an extent that the owner abandoned the idea of remodeling it. Vacant and neglected for some time it was finally demolished.



KRIETER-HALFMAN HOUSE

NICHOLSON HOMESTEAD

The Reverend George Nicholson, a widower and a native of Pennsylvania, left the Keystone State with his four children, John, Emory, Isabel, and Catherine, and his new bride, the former Clarinda Prichett, in 1852. Some time later the family took up residence in a white, two-story frame house in the western part of Ross Township on what is now called Hendricks Street. It was, however, called Nicholson Road in the second half of the 19th Century. George then exchanged the pulpit for a plow and began farming.

Originally, the land was the property of a David Fowler who secured it via a land grant signed by President John Tyler in 1843. It is thought that the house, which is still standing, was built about 1845. In 1847, the home and land were leased to Freeman and Julia Killmer by Henry Stichleman for a period of 99 years in exchange for certain services like mending, replacing buttons, bed and meals, and care of Henry's horses. This "in perpetuity" lease was still in effect when the Killmers sold the property to George Nicholson in 1865. The land has been associated with the Nicholson family, though not in a direct line, for more than 111 years.

George raised cattle, butchered meat, and sold the beef to county stores. There was a smoke house on the premises to preserve the meat and give it that wood-aged flavor. The land was well supplied with water as Turkey Creek meandered through the acreage, and the fertile land permitted George to grow potatoes and grain for profit.

Clarinda used a bell, whose clanging resounded all over the farm, to summon the men for the evening meal. The horses, upon the ringing of the bell, exhibited a behavioral response that Pavlov would have been proud to include in his research notebooks. These animals were so accustomed to the routine that at the sound of the bell, the horses, unprovoked by their riders, would turn around in the fields and head straight for the house.

George's son, Emory J., brought his wife, Mary Elizabeth (Pierce), (daughter of Jessie Pierce, one of our earliest settlers), to live in the family home. Some years later, Emory then moved his family along with George, who was now retired, to Hammond, Indiana. After George's death, the Emory Nicholson family moved back to town, and in 1896, built a new two-story frame house next door to the old homestead.

Emory's son, Alfred, married Grace (Spaulding) and ran a feed store with his father. Alfred also operated a silver fox farm and he and Grace occupied the old house where their only daughter, Phyllis, was born.

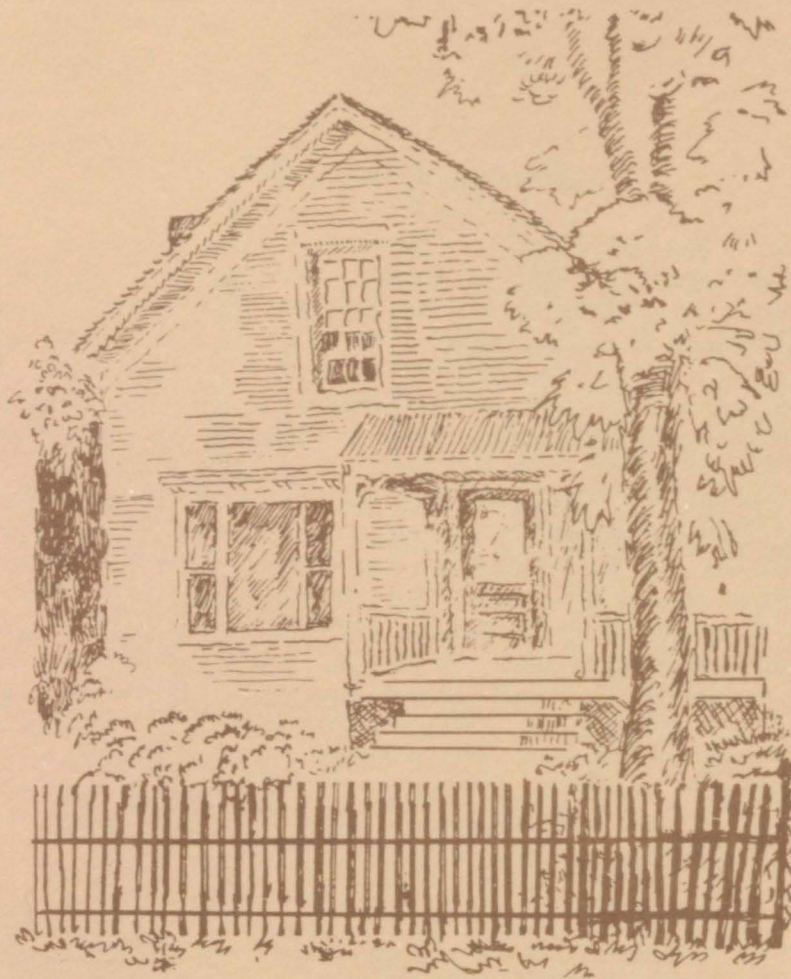
A variety of Nicholson relatives have lived in the house over the years. George's grandson, George Baker, and his wife, Lena (Prott) lived there while their children were young. Later, they moved to a farm on Colorado Street. Another grandson, Clarence Kitchel, also spent many years in the ancestral home. John Christianson lived in the house and was a member of the family that Clara Nicholson, (George's daughter) married into.

For many years the house was occupied by renters until 1944 when it was sold to William and Letha Meyer and it passed out of Nicholson family ownership. When William died, Letha moved to her son-in-law's and daughter's home (Mr. and Mrs. John Carlton). Dorothy Carlton taught school in the area for many years. Letha's son, Leonard Meyer, purchased the home in 1970. Leonard was married to Alma (Christianson), great-granddaughter to George Nicholson. This union restored the house to the Nicholson family.

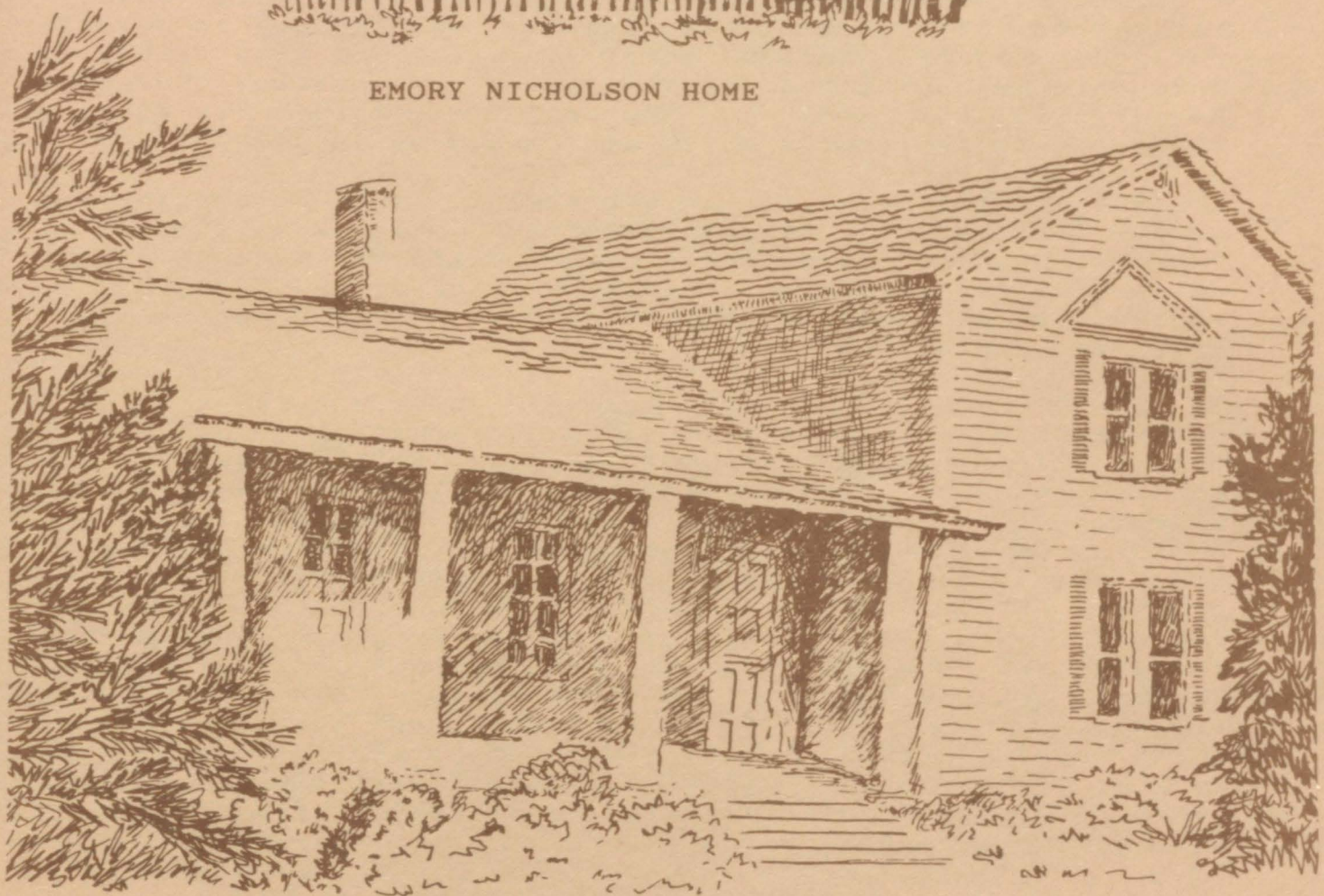
The second home connected with the Nicholson genealogy is the one built in 1896 upon Emory's return from Hammond, Indiana. This history of this house is no less complicated than that of George's house. Emory lived in the house until his death in 1923. Many people rented the house including relatives of early pioneer families such as Henry Franz and the Halls. Mr. and Mrs. William Meyer also lived in this house as well as the house next door.

Today, George's great-great-granddaughter, (or Emory's great-granddaughter), Sharon (Meyer) Crist resides there with her husband, Lorenzo Crist and their two children, Michael and Michelle. The children represent the 6th generation of the Nicholson family in this area.

Mr. and Mrs. Crist took possession in 1960 and the Lorenzo business, C & C Ornamental Iron Co., is located at the rear of the property on what was originally Nicholson farmland. The house is relatively unchanged on the outside save for a new family room addition and the removal of the iron fence and gate at the front of the house. The view from the family room affords a beautiful view of gentle slopes rolling toward geometrically cut fields onward to stands of trees bordering Turkey Creek which flows nearby.



EMORY NICHOLSON HOME



GEORGE NICHOLSON HOME

THE METHODIST CHURCH

The Merrillville Methodist Church has been a focus of activity for religious and social affairs in this community for more than a century. Its origins, like those of the Turkey Creek Catholic Church, are rooted in meetings in private homes. Later, circuit riders like the Rev. Charles Barton, conducted services bi-weekly in a log building that stood where Broadway crosses the Old Lincoln Highway.

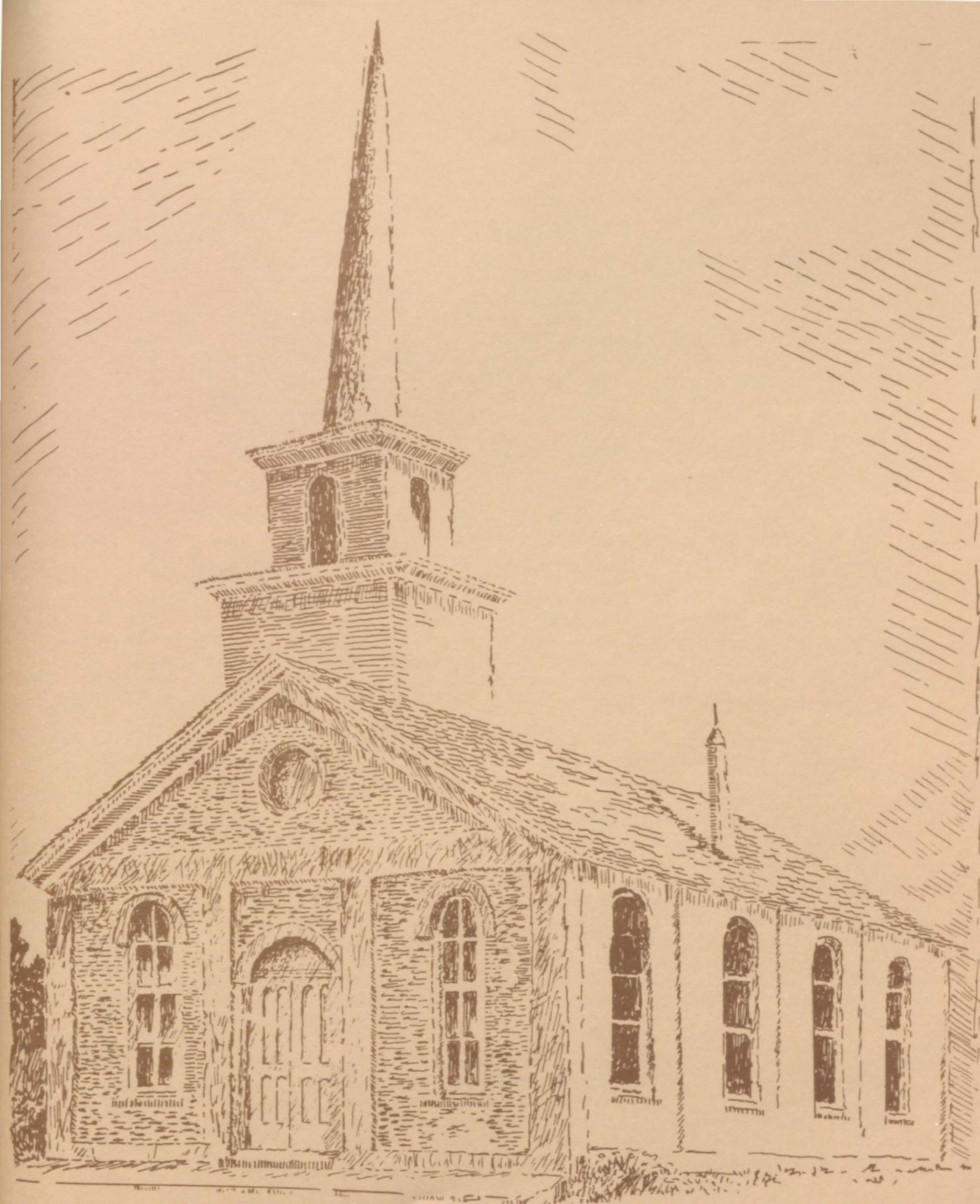
In 1862, the church was assimilated into the Methodist Episcopal Conference, and 14 years later, at a Union Bank Camp meeting held in Merrillville, the desire for a permanent house of worship was voiced. In 1879 under a Rev. Sanders, their dream became reality when the building illustrated here was erected and outfitted with pulpit, chairs, chandeliers, carpet, and a Communion set, through the efforts of the newly formed Ladies Aid Society. The structure, located on West 73rd Avenue, 1 block west of Broadway, was embellished with railings and pews handmade of black walnut hauled from the town of Furnessville, Indiana. A 625 pound bronze bell summoned the faithful to services.

Over the decades, the church acquired and sold several structures. The Ladies Aid Society was housed in Merrill Hall, donated by Charles Merrill in 1908. In 1909, a parsonage was built two blocks west of the church. In 1928, Merrill Hall was sold and the proceeds were used to finance the annex to the church which was completed in 1930.

In 1934, in the midst of the Depression, the parsonage was put up for sale as the congregation could not support a resident pastor. This sale helped diminish the debt on the annex. During this time, church members like Henry Kuehl, would lead the congregation in prayer in the absence of a certified man of the cloth.

In 1948, however, a new parsonage was built and the town once again enjoyed the advantage of a minister in residence. In 1958 a new church of limestone with a seating capacity for 350 people was erected on East 68th Place under Rev. Fred S. Wintle, Pastor. Mr. Harold Knoup was the chairman of the building committee, which consisted of Clarence Greimann, Mrs. James Anderson, Gordon Birk, and Hugh Mohler.

The old bronze bell that was atop the original church was moved to the new edifice to continue its faithful duties. The bell not only alerted the congregation to the time of worship, but rang with joy on such occasions as Armistice Day on November 11, 1918, and tolled solemnly and sorrowfully as funeral processions, complete with flower girls marching beneath it, the clapper striking one woeful tone for each year of the deceased person's life.



METHODIST CHURCH
(73rd Avenue)

Today, melodious chimes ring out a haunting refrain at dawn, noon, and dusk, urging believers everywhere to pause in their daily routine and turn their thoughts heavenward.

The old church building, minus the bell and steeple, is now used by the Volunteer Fire Department. Many members mourned this transformation of their beloved church. Many people would have preferred to see the building, with its rich history, preserved as a monument.

Old-timers can recall days when buggy loads of worshippers, dressed in their Sunday best, pulled up outside the church and tethered their horses to the rail at the nearby Stoltz Store. Young men chafed behind starched collars; little girls were mindful not to wrinkle their ruffled skirts. Adults congregated outside exchanging greetings and bits of news. Within the church's beautiful confines, the faithful offered thanks to the Lord for His bounty and asked forgiveness for their sins.

For a time the hymnals used contained words only--no notes. There seemed to be some question as to the propriety of having instruments as part of the services and the hymns were sung without accompaniment; the key was set by the use of a tuning fork. In later years it was decided that organ and piano music was sufficiently solemn and reverent to be included in the ritual. Mrs. Lillian Pierce is particularly well remembered for the addition her piano playing made to the services. The talented Lillian (Kuehl) Butcher, who now lives in Crown Point, was the church organist for over 30 years.

Over the last century, the church has served the community by being a spiritual guardian, a charitable organization, and as a social center. This latter facet functioned in common undertakings such as graduation ceremonies to quilting bees, from chicken suppers to theatrical productions to events for the young people of the community.

From the days when only one man was counted in its small congregation to the present time, the church has been a magnet drawing people from various backgrounds to provide a place for the exchange of ideas that cannot be equalled by modern communications media. Newspapers and television, though rich sources of information, cannot provide the warm, personal touch that attends social interaction.

The church has been characterized by a membership that has given their time, talents, and financial support unselfishly. Charles Merrill donated a building, Mrs. Stoltz offered the use of her oven for warming the chicken pies for the suppers, and Hiram Barton taught the Sunday School at age 11 and was the choirmaster for many years.

Many members, including Charles Boyd and Herbert Saxton, picked up hammers and paintbrushes when work needed to be completed on the Annex. Mrs. Pierce and Mrs. Coffee put their talents to use and ran the Ladies Aid Society. Mr. Henry Fieler has given his time, money, effort, and support to many of the functions of the church.

Mr. Hugh Mohler performed a silent act of charity that went undiscovered until many years after his death. Mr. Mohler, who was a wizard in the field of electricity, lent his expertise to the setting up of a sound system for the chimes he had hoped to see installed in the new church building. When the time came to install the chimes, it was discovered that a lot of the work had already been done (at a great savings to the Church) and sealed up to be used when needed. Fittingly, the chimes have been dedicated to the memory of Hugh Mohler.

Devotion and dedication, such as that shown by those listed in this account and many, many others, have been a mainstay of the Methodist Church in Merrillville over the last century.

In 1969, the Merrillville Methodist Church merged with the United Brethren Church and since that time is known as the United Methodist Church. At this writing the pastor is the Reverend Richard J. Crispell.

HALSTED FARMS

The Halsted family is numbered among the pioneer families of Merrillville who have witnessed the growth and development of this town from its inception in the 1830s to the present day.

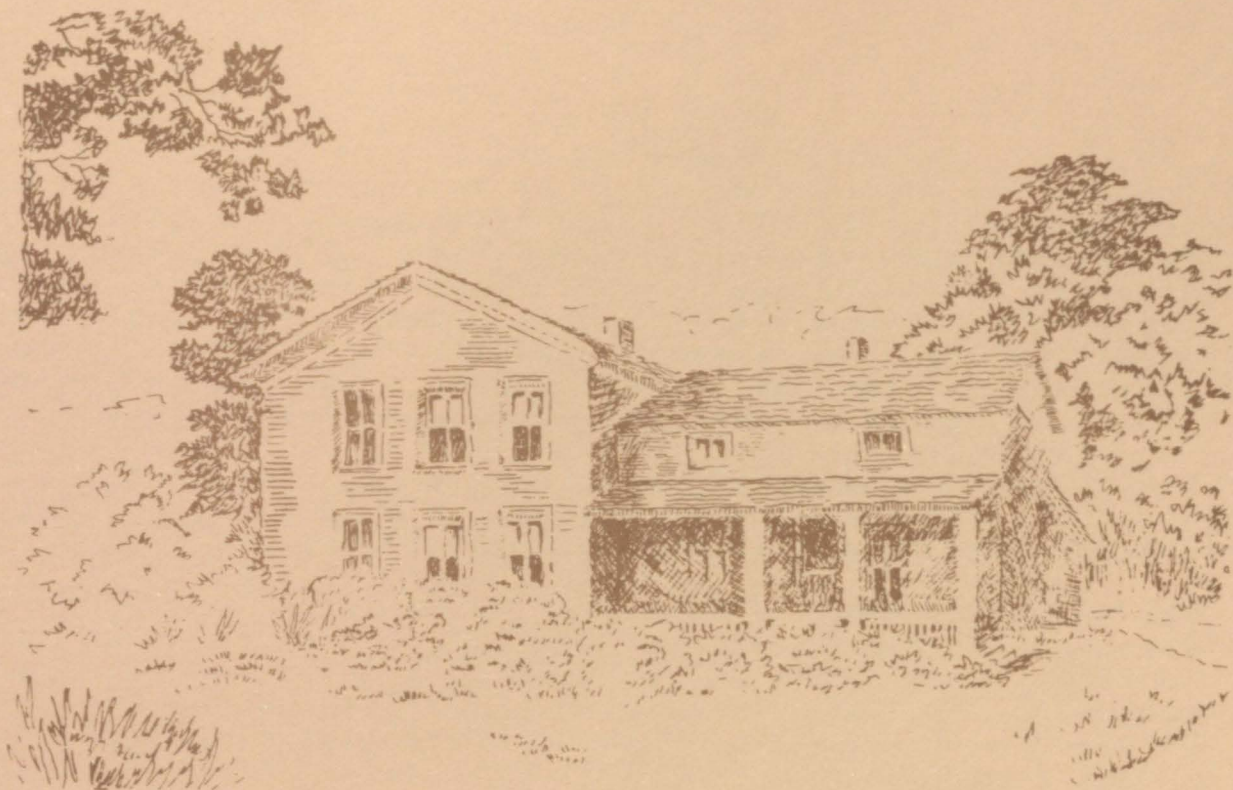
James Halsted, the progenitor of this family, settled in the area in 1838 and carved from its wilderness a very large and productive dairy and grain farm. There are two Halsted homes located on east 69th Avenue that were undoubtedly built within a few years of each other. Some people believe that the house on 69th Avenue near Mississippi Street, built by Wallace Halsted, son of James, actually predates the building erected in 1872 by the father, James Halsted at 2701 East 69th Avenue by a few years.

The home Wallace built has two different foundations, one of field stone and the other of brick. This leads one to believe that the house was not built all at one time. It is known that James M., brother of Wallace, added a new section in 1880. Moreover, on the second floor across the hall from the two bedrooms, is an area that had never been finished. It is only a skeleton of a room with one by twelve inch boards, rough cut, lining the floor and the walls. It seems the Halsted children used this as a playroom on rainy days.

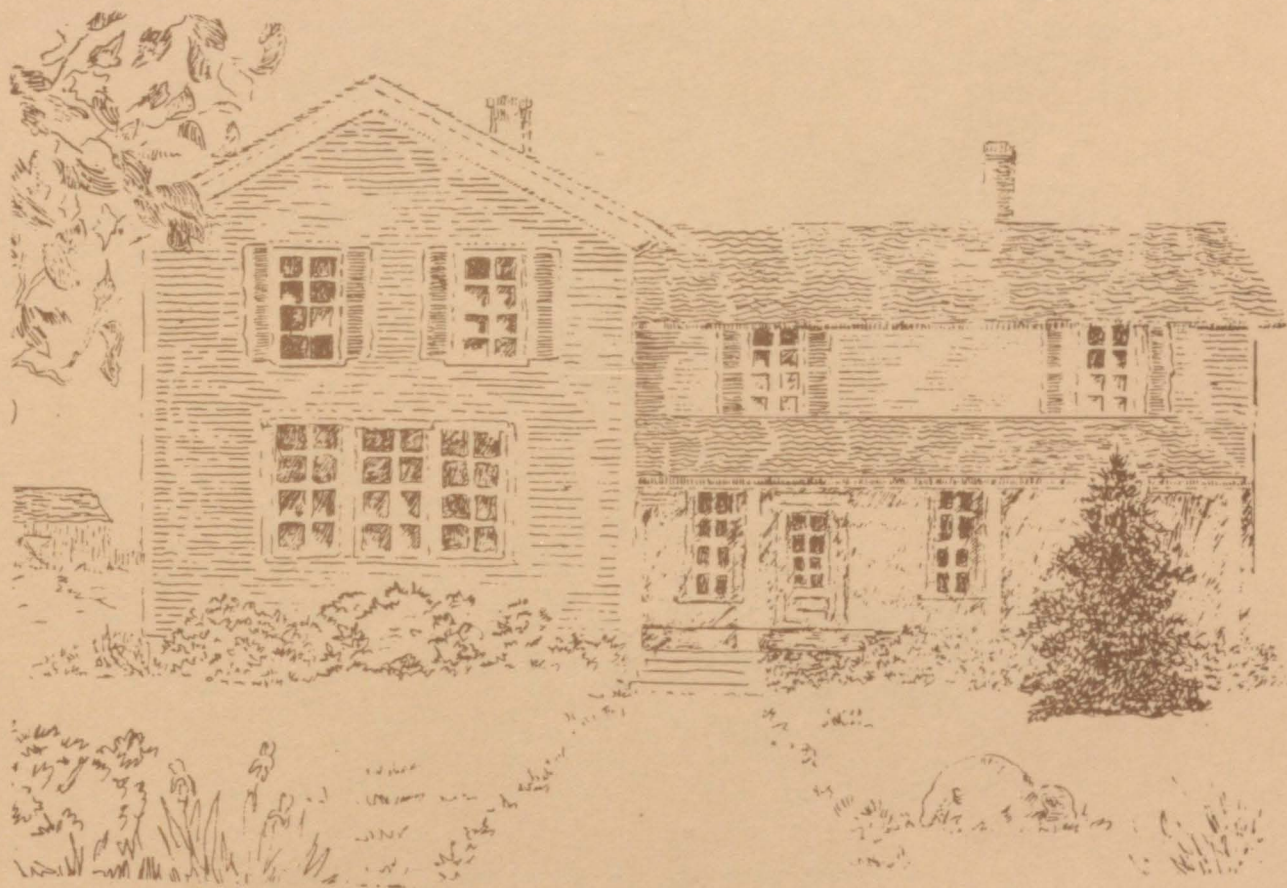
James Montgomery Halsted raised his children in the old house and, proud of his brood, James stained each of their names into the woodwork of various doors. "Albert E." was stained on the kitchen door; the stairway entrance bore the name of "Roy" and the names of "Emma" and "James" adorned the double French doors.

In later years, James Montgomery moved to Hobart, leaving the farm in his son Roy's capable hands. Each summer James would return to the farm to live with his son. Roy's son, James, fondly recalls watching his grandpa sit on a large stone in front of the house and whittle for hours.

During the Depression, Roy left the farm to operate a gas station and restaurant in town. Then Jim, who had been assisting his mother in the business, left for Massachusetts to court his future wife, Eileen. Since then the farm has not known the footsteps of a Halsted because it has been rented out.



JAMES HALSTED FARMHOUSE



HALSTED HOMESTEAD

The nine room residence built by patriarch James, has been in the Halsted family for four generations and replaced the log cabin that they initially called home. The Halsteds improved a wooded tract of land into a productive dairy and grain farm. They cleared the land, prepared the soil, planted crops, watched over them carefully, and reaped the benefits of their diligence at harvest time. Theirs is the saga of countless unsung heroes, the farmers of the Midwest.

When James died in 1898, his son Albert inherited the house and 160 acres which he worked until 1901, at which time he put the farm up for lease and moved to Hobart.

The year 1919 saw the return of a Halsted to the farm when Ray, son of Albert, brought his wife, Pearl (Demmon) Halsted to live there. Their two sons, Kenneth and Malcolm, were reared on the family land, and in 1944, when Ray moved to Hobart, Kenneth took over the operation of the farm. Years later, in 1960, Kenneth followed his father to Hobart but returned 12 years later to retire to the family farm with his wife, Almira.

The Halsteds are proud of their hardworking heritage and that tradition still survives today. They have not only made contributions in the realm of agricultural development but have also been active in community affairs and businesses. For example, Kenneth was part of an outstanding musical group that performed at school functions and dances for over 30 years. He was a local barber for 42 years.

Kenneth's brother, Malcolm, owns the Culligan Soft Water business in the area, and their cousin Jim Halsted, who led efforts to reinstate the post office in Merrillville, and who is active in the Historical Society, lends his time to many planning and advisory groups showing concern to the various civic problems.

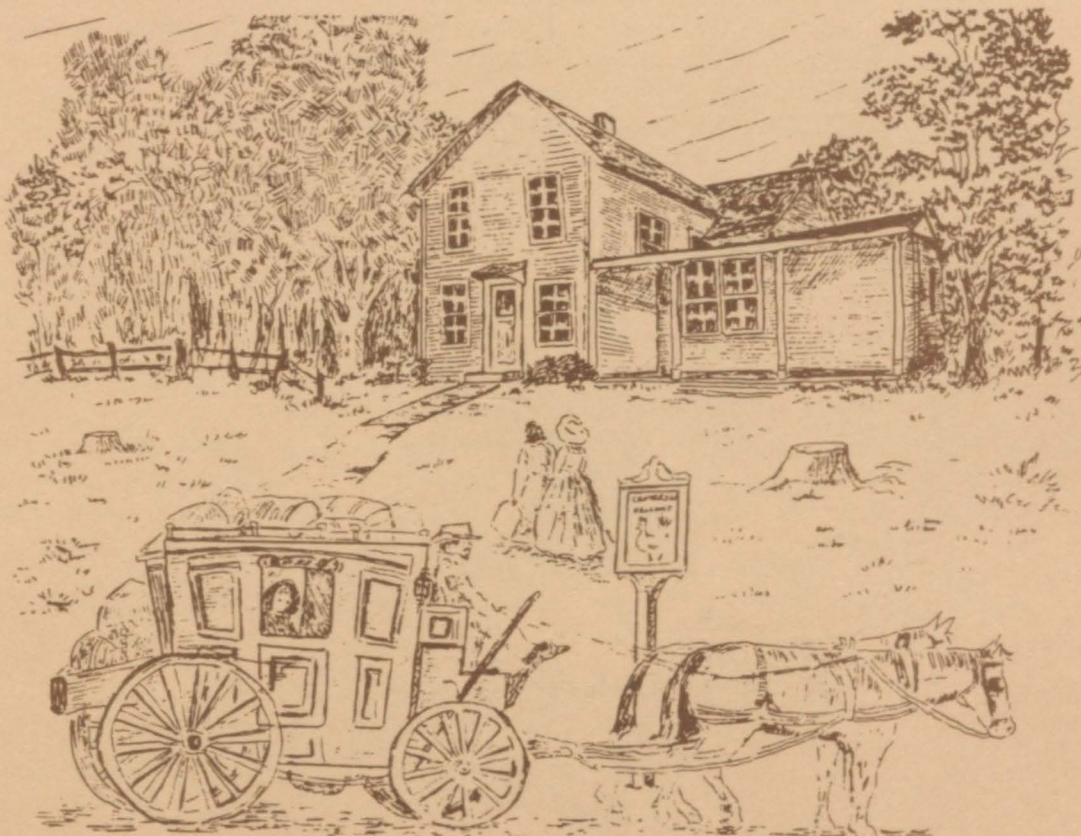
NASSAHN HOME AND STORE

Elizabeth Nassahn (1845-1911) with the assistance of her two sons, Emile and Gottlieb (both of whom later moved to Oregon), and her daughter Hattie (who moved to Brimfield, Indiana) operated a grocery and dry goods store in this frame house (built circa 1874) pictured here. It is located on West 73rd Avenue across from the old Iddings house and adjacent to the Perry Goodrich home.

The Nassahn family ran a huckster wagon about town and to the farms to attract customers who might never have entered the store. The store is reputed to have been a stage stop in earlier days.

Elizabeth met a tragic end when her clothing caught fire while she was burning brush in her back yard. Neighbor, Mrs. Perry Goodrich, although first on the scene, was unable to reach her in time.

The house is presently occupied by the Powers family.



NASSHAHN HOME AND STORE

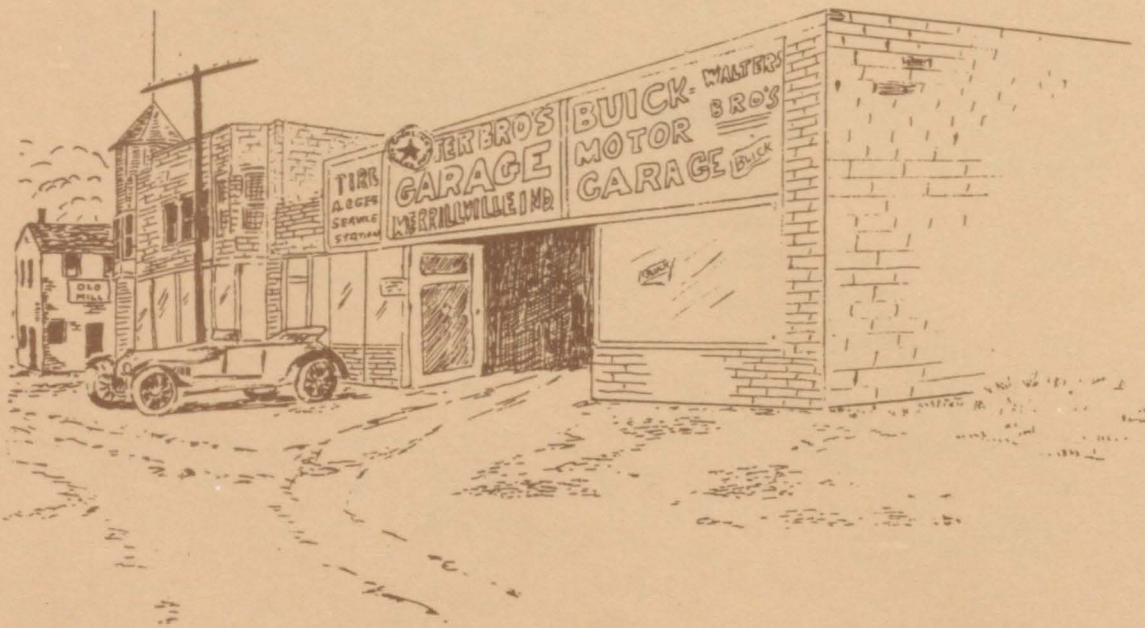
WALTER BROTHERS' GARAGE

Like their father, Ernest "Cheese Henry" Walter, the three sons, Howard, Leslie, and Clarence, were capable business men who undertook their enterprise in 1917 when they were only 18, 20, and 21 years of age, respectively.

At first, the young entrepreneurs operated out of Elbert's Garage, an old wooden building; later they relocated to the Keilman building on the southwest corner West 73rd Avenue and Madison Street. John Keilman built and repaired race cars in the building but soon closed shop and rented the space to the Walter brothers who opened a Buick dealership along with a repair shop.

Attached to the garage was a restaurant and tavern operated by Carl Gerlach (brother to Howard's wife, Pat) and his wife, Zella. Carl abandoned that business when Zella became ill, and the building then housed a variety of business ventures including another restaurant, a sweet shop, a dress shop, and an ice cream shop. The latter was run by Pat (Gerlach) Walter, who "threw in the towel" when it became apparent that her husband and her brothers-in-law were literally eating up the profits by snacking on ice cream and cake.

"The young bucks hung out at the Walter Garage in those days", and one of them, Fred Lennertz, became sufficiently interested in the work to become Clarence "Dutch" Walter's partner when Leslie and Howard sold out in 1923. The new firm of Walter and Lennertz Oldsmobile relocated on Broadway soon after its establishment. The sons of the two men, James Lennertz and Kenneth Walter, took over the business in 1950. The fathers retired in 1961 and later the business became known as Lennertz Oldsmobile when Kenneth sold his interest to James.



WALTER BROTHERS' GARAGE
1917

THE HALFMAN HOMESTEAD

The Halfman Homestead on East 56th Avenue sits in an isolated pocket of antiquity surrounded by gnarled, old trees of considerable girth, bent with age. Built by Henry Halfman circa 1870, the two-story frame house once faced an expanse of farmland unmarked by the many trappings of civilization.

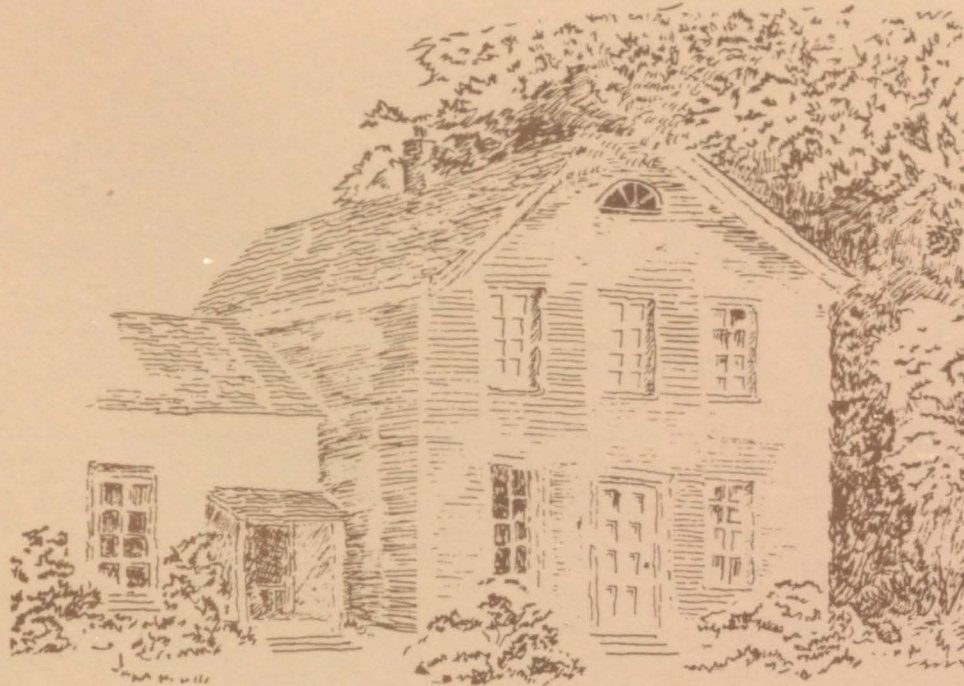
Today, the house borders a modern real estate development. The road itself forms a line of demarcation as it bisects the past and the present. On one side can be seen the quiet simplicity of a once active farm and on the other side, the crowded confusion of a contemporary sub-division.

William Halfman, son of Henry and Mary Ellen (Mellon) Halfman was born on this farm in 1875 but left it for Chicago at the age of 16. While in Chicago, William pursued a variety of occupations including policeman, milkman, and streetcar conductor, but abandoned all of them in favor of returning to Indiana to operate his father's 300 acre farm in Ross Township.

In 1902, William undertook the manufacturing of cigars on the farm. He advertised his high-grade five cent smoke with a gimmick that rivals the Goodyear Blimp for effectiveness. His balloons contained promissory notes redeemable for a box of his "Halfman White Ribbon" Cigars. A deal like that must have prompted a lot of sky searching in hopes of securing a sample of Halfman's tobacco delights.

William married Clara (Klein) Halfman of Chicago and they had five children: Clara, Edward, Marie, Mildred, and Francis. Tall and heavyset William is remembered as a man of imposing physical presence. His robust physique did not make him appear ominous though, as he was blessed with a genial personality that made him a superb salesman and a powerful persuader in civic matters.

After William's death, his son Edward, who had assisted his father for many years, took over the management of the farm, aided by his wife Mabel (Weinand) Halfman, daughter of Minnie and Joseph Weinand. Edward passed away recently and is survived by his wife, Mabel, and their son, Raymond.

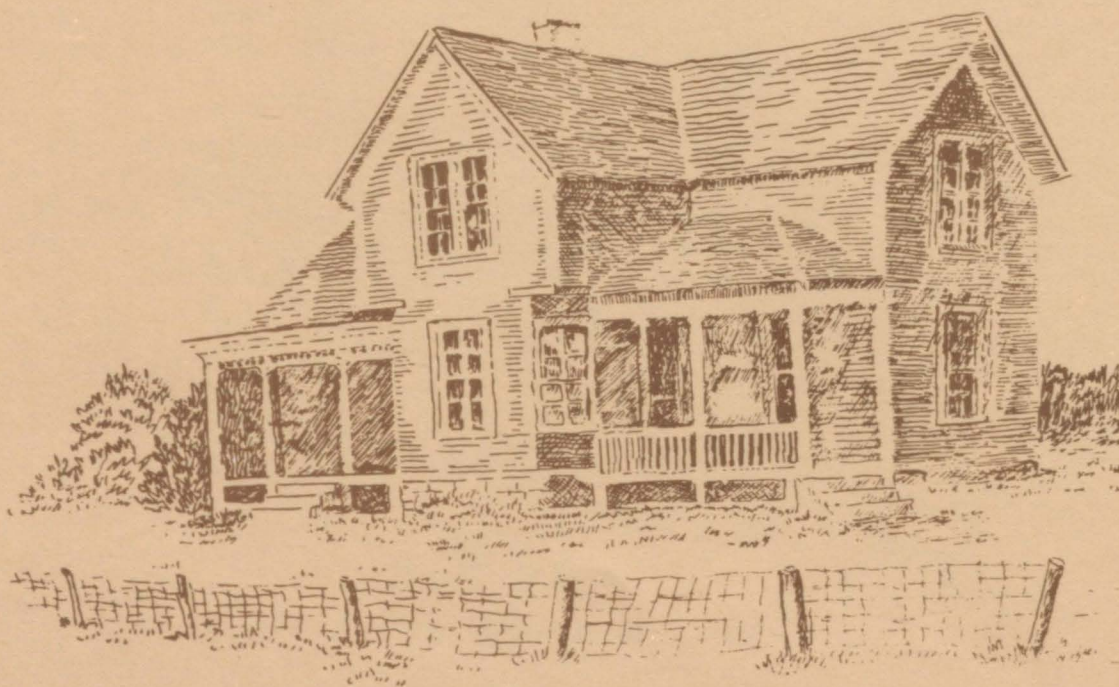


HALFMAN HOMESTEAD

FRANK CHRISTENSON HOME

Frank Christenson, son of Nelson Peter and Elizabeth Ann (Butts) Christenson, lived in the house (pictured) on Nicholson Road.

He married Clara (Nicholson) daughter of Emory and Elizabeth (Pierce) Nicholson. Frank, who resides in the Hessville section of Hammond, Indiana, celebrated his 94th birthday in May of 1976.



CHRISTENSON HOME

JOSEPH FRANZ HOME

Joseph Franz, born in 1842, came here from Germany as a young boy with his mother and stepfather. Brother to Balzar Franz, (whose history is located elsewhere in this book) Joseph stayed on the family farm until he was of age, then he moved to a two-story frame house with a small side addition that dates back to 1865. Joseph and his wife, Cylivia (Cyphers) Franz, brought up their children in the shrubbery encircled house on Cleveland Street. Only the youngest, Henry, of 15 children survives at this writing.

The Franz family and their descendants contributed greatly to the agricultural development of this area, and their name is linked through marriage with several pioneer families, many of whose names ought, by now, be quite familiar to the reader.

A partial list of Joseph's children and their spouses follows: Marie wed Joseph Hein; Joseph married Helen Bothwell; Clara became Mrs. John Wehner; Sabina married Anthony Schneider and her brother, Aloysius, married Mary Schneider. Henry married Agnes Gresser, Frances became Mrs. Edward Koch, Appelonia took John Hein as her husband; Frank took Mary Klein as his wife and Anna married Frank Krieter. Many descendants of the above couples still reside in the area.

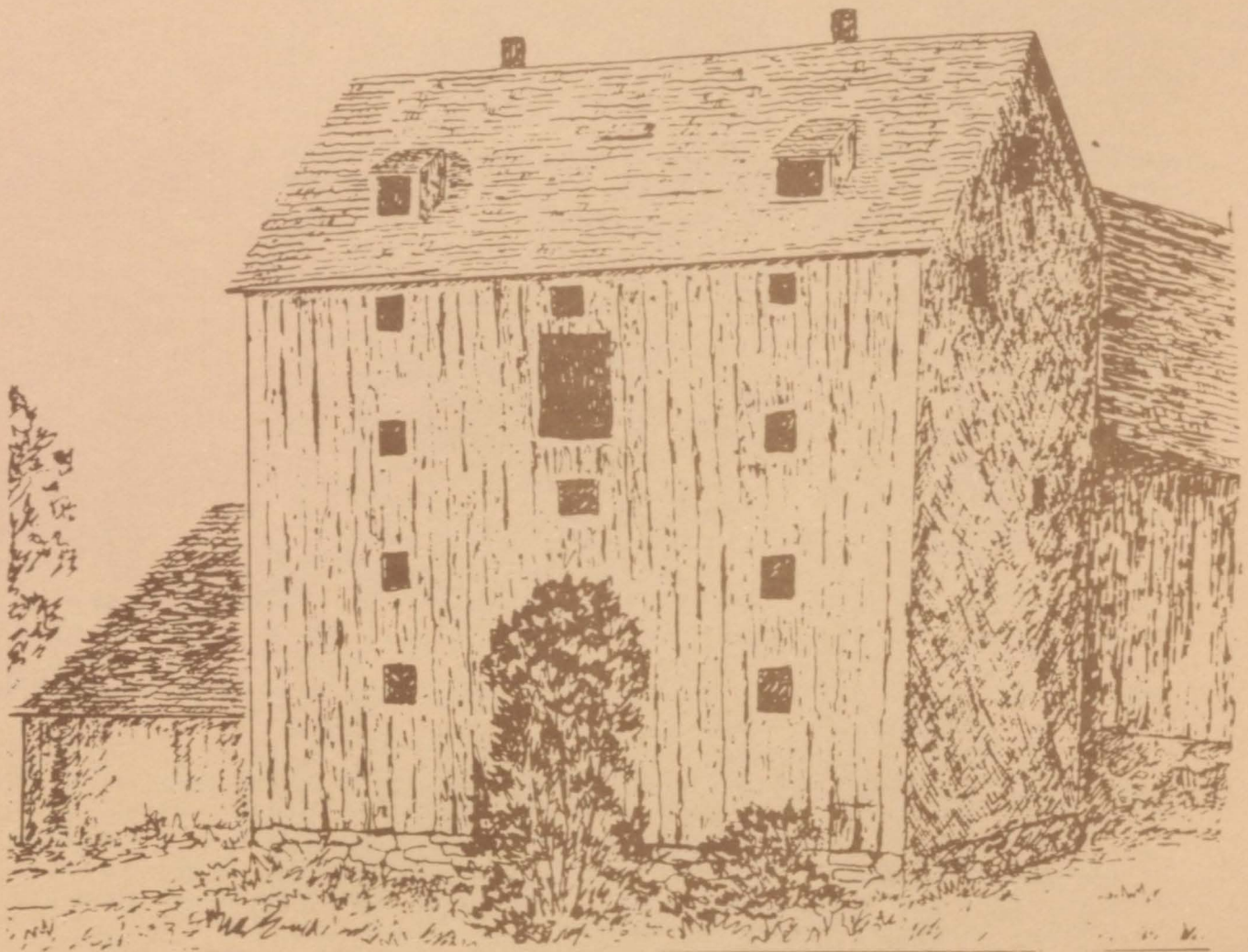


JOSEPH FRANZ HOME



THE JOSEPH FRANZ FAMILY

Bottom Row: Henry, Sabina, Victoria, and Frances
 Middle: Anna, Cecelia, Joseph and Cylvia (Cyphers), Marie
 Top: Appelonia, Joseph Jr., Edward, Frank, Clara, Aloysius



FRANK KRIETER BARN

This unusually contoured barn that takes its concept from architecture of Frank Krieter's homeland, Germany, is located on 57th Avenue (originally called Krieter Road) just off Cleveland Street.

BARTON HOUSE

Many of the older buildings in Ross Township have been remodeled to provide the comfortable conveniences of modern times, i.e., indoor plumbing and electricity. Oftentimes, in the process of modernizing, alterations are made on the outside of the structure that blur the features that mark the building as belonging to another time.

The Barton House, located just west of the Fire Station on 73rd Avenue, is an example of a remodeled house in which the changes are not obtrusive. When once the roof was hipped and supported a small cupola, it is now gabled and extends lower on the sides. A dormer was added to provide more room, and small-paned windows have been replaced with larger ones.

The builder of this house, Hiram Barton, was an unusual and most unforgettable man. Born in Cass County, Michigan, in 1839, he came to Lake County in 1848 with his family.

Hiram's father, the Reverend Charles Barton, was a circuit rider and shoemaker. The former occupation paid only when church stewards solicited in behalf of the preacher and even then, the payment was often in the form of crops, not cash. To eke out a living, Charles operated a farm (located on Mississippi Street, near Route 30) in Ross Township with the help of his growing sons in whom he instilled high moral principles and a religious conviction that would sustain them the rest of their lives.

Young Hiram remained on the farm until his marriage to Martha (Roneys) Barton. At that time he apprenticed himself to a carpenter, and three years later having learned the trade, he contracted on his own to build houses as well as other buildings and also did repair work. He worked at his trade for 23 years.

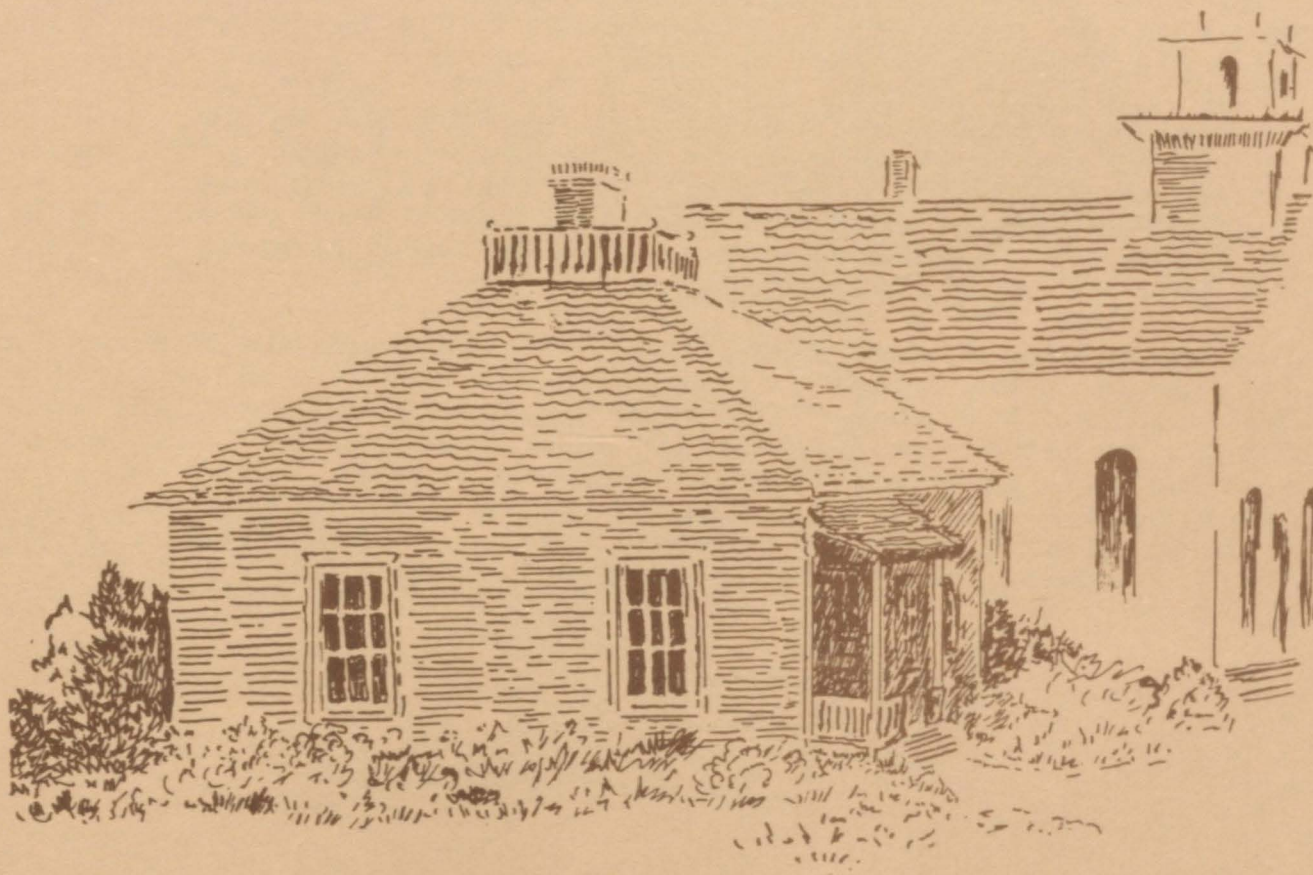
In 1862, at the first firing of a gun at Fort Sumter, he laid aside his hammer and saw and enlisted in the Co. N. 99th Indiana Volunteers. During his three year absence the youngest of his two children, a son, died.

Upon his return in 1865 he was elected Township Assessor, an office he held for the next nine years. This was the start of a series of public posts he was to occupy over the next 40 or so years. He was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1903 by the Honorable Board of Commissioners. Hiram also has the distinction of being elected the first president of the "Old Settlers Association".

To Hiram, as to his father before him, religion was a 24 hour a day, seven day a week pursuit. As a man of high moral conviction, he lived his beliefs and lent his services zealously to the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was very dedicated to the Sunday School Program and taught a class of eight young boys when Hiram himself was only 11 years old.

For several years, he was the only male member of the congregation. He led the choir in song and "sang beautifully for a man". Hiram's "praise the Lord" was always distinctly heard at the end of each prayer. Eventually, his efforts and enthusiasm were rewarded with a License to Exhort granted by the Reverend Clifton of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1876. In 1902, his life's dream became a reality when he was issued a local "Preacher's License".

Kind and considerate Hiram, who, in his later years wore a snow white beard, is remembered as a man of high integrity and marked generosity. It is highly fitting that this man who spent his whole life in an effort to be close to his Creator would choose to build his home so near a House of God, the old Methodist Church which is now the Merrillville fire station.



BARTON HOUSE

DEEP RIVER

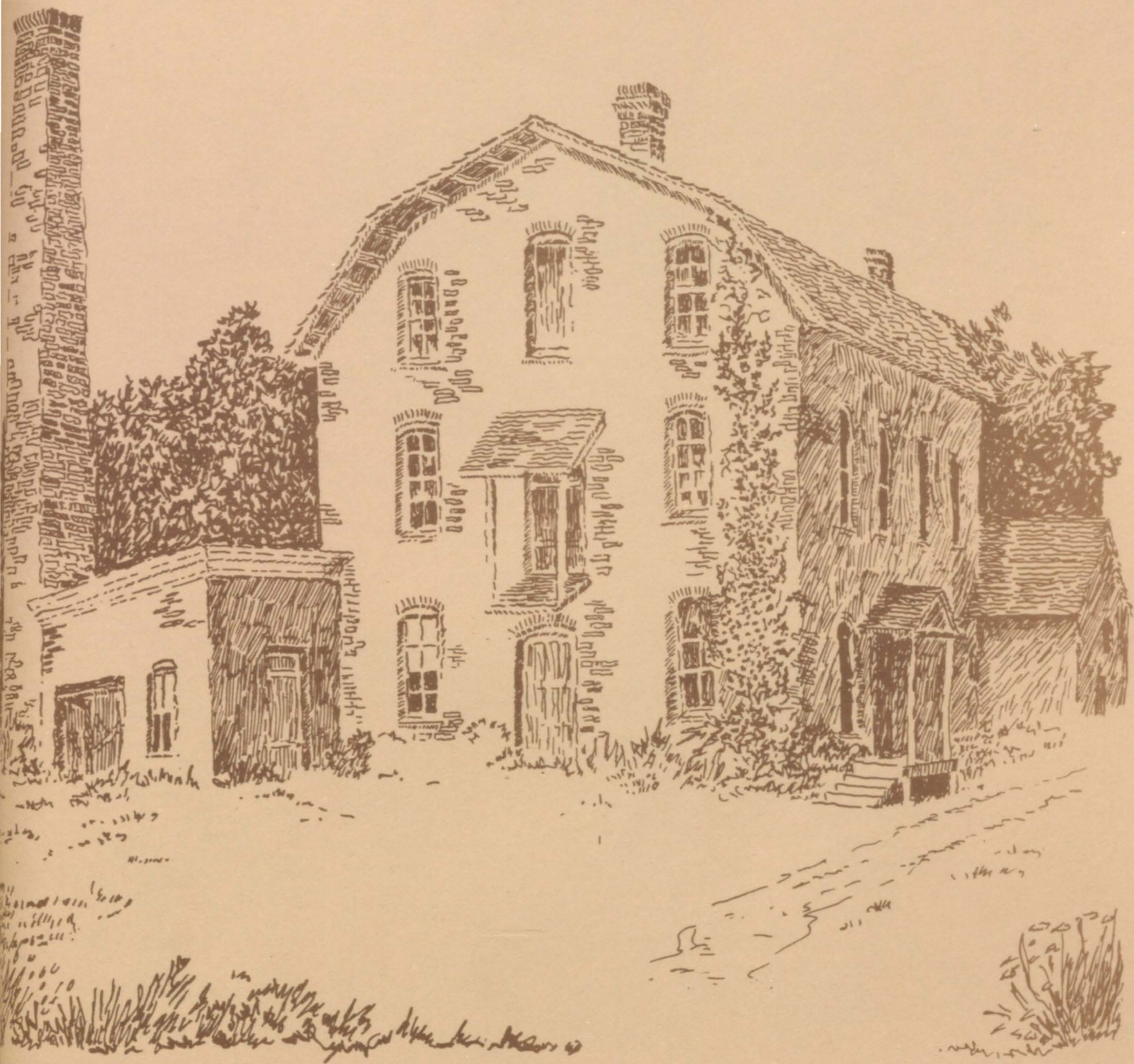
This picturesque area, located at the eastern most part of Lake County in the vicinity of 73rd Avenue, is a tree shaded village tucked away among the woods on a curving road and is watered by the stream from which it derives its name. A bronze tablet in the center of the Village Commons pays homage to the settlement's founder, John Wood.

Wood, a native of Salem, Massachusetts, came into this area that was once the hunting grounds of the Potawatomi Indians and erected a log cabin at Deep River in 1835. He then returned East for his wife, Hannah (Pattee) Wood. In his absence a senator "floated" his claim in the name of the old Indian called Quashma. Wood had envisioned a mill on that land so he purchased the land from the Indian, paying \$1,000 for it instead of the \$200 he had expected to pay to the government.

In 1837 John Wood built a saw mill and the next year he built the first grist mill in all of Lake County. The three-story, red brick building was nearly surrounded by a dense thicket of trees and its rear exposure was on the stream. Farmers from miles around brought their grain and unloaded it at the side door for grinding and often waited two to three days for their flour. This mill is currently being restored and plans are in effect to make it a museum.

Gradually, houses began to spring up in the vicinity of the mill, and the area came to be known as Woodvale. This was a community in which John Wood would allow no liquor. It was many years before even the most reputable of taverns opened for business in Woodvale, because John Wood refused to mark out lots for sale to developers.

John Wood and his descendants were responsible for several well known structures in Deep River, many of which are depicted in this book. The home of John's son, Nathan, was a two-story red brick building that was very elaborately designed. A grandson, Henry, lived in a plain two-story frame house. Olive Wood, the great-granddaughter of John, resided in a home of unusual contours with its ornately trimmed gables, curved wing, and back addition.



DEEP RIVER MILL
(JOHN WOOD MILL)



HENRY WOOD RESIDENCE

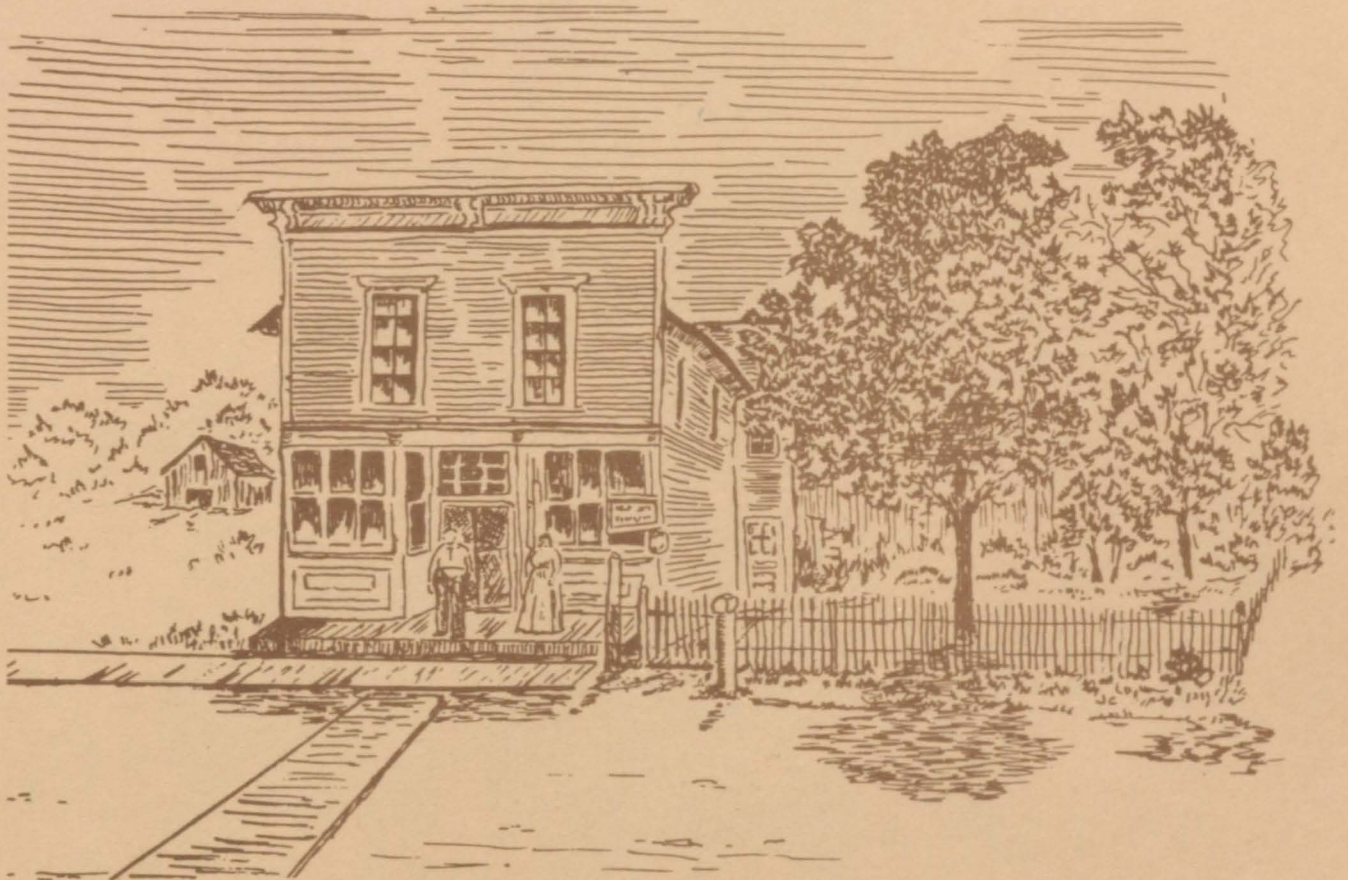


NATHAN WOOD HOME
BUILT 1849

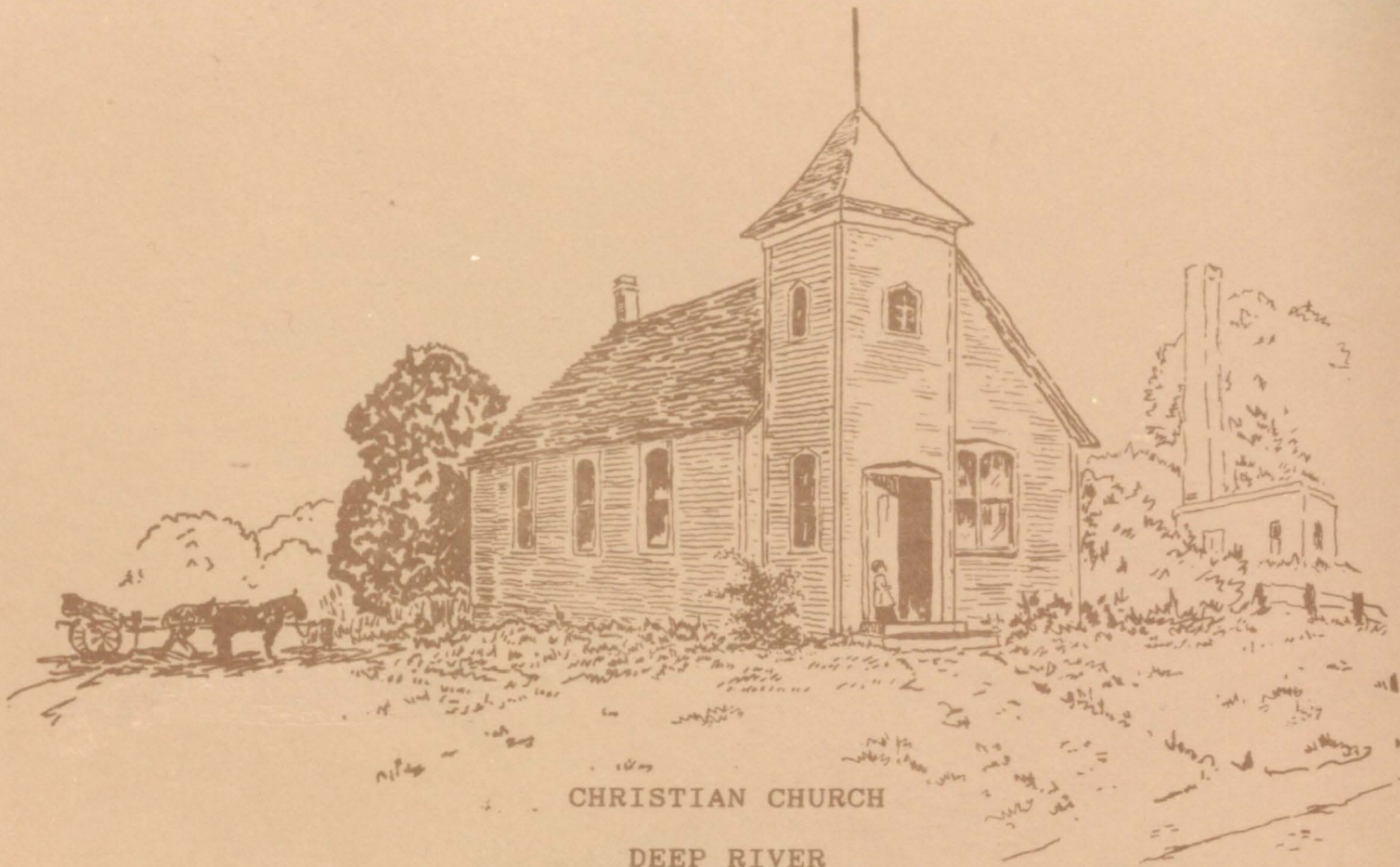
GENERAL STORE

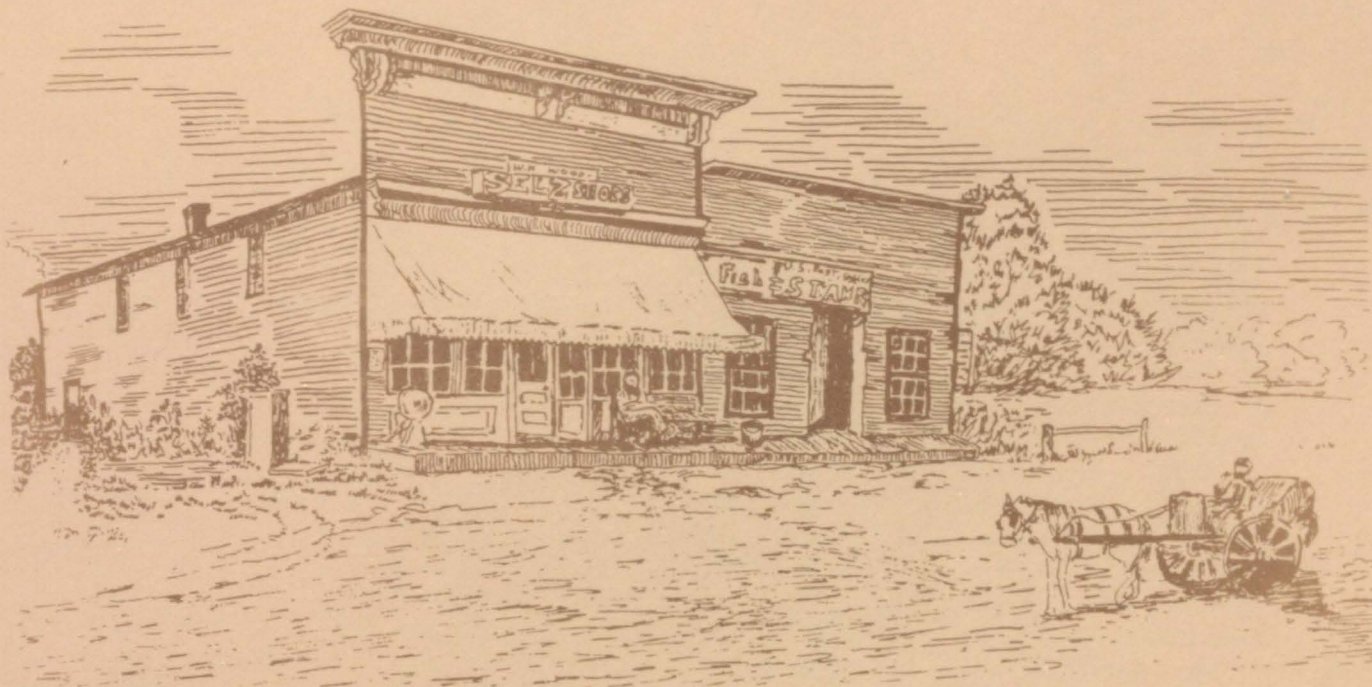
In 1840, there were 14 families living in the area of Deep River and just a few businesses. There was, of course, John's Mill, operated at that time by son, Nathan. Another son, Augustus, ran a general store and John's son-in-law, a Dr. A. A. Vincent, was the village doctor and druggist.

A blacksmith shop run by William Waldeck and a shoe repair shop completed the village businesses. There was a school house which unfortunately was lost in a fire and was never rebuilt. Several of these businesses can be seen in the accompanying illustrations. Also pictured is the Christian Church built in 1900, and since it is no longer in use, it is expected to become part of the Museum. In fact, a motion is on the books to preserve the entire village intact as a living museum so rich is the collection of historical buildings that abound there.

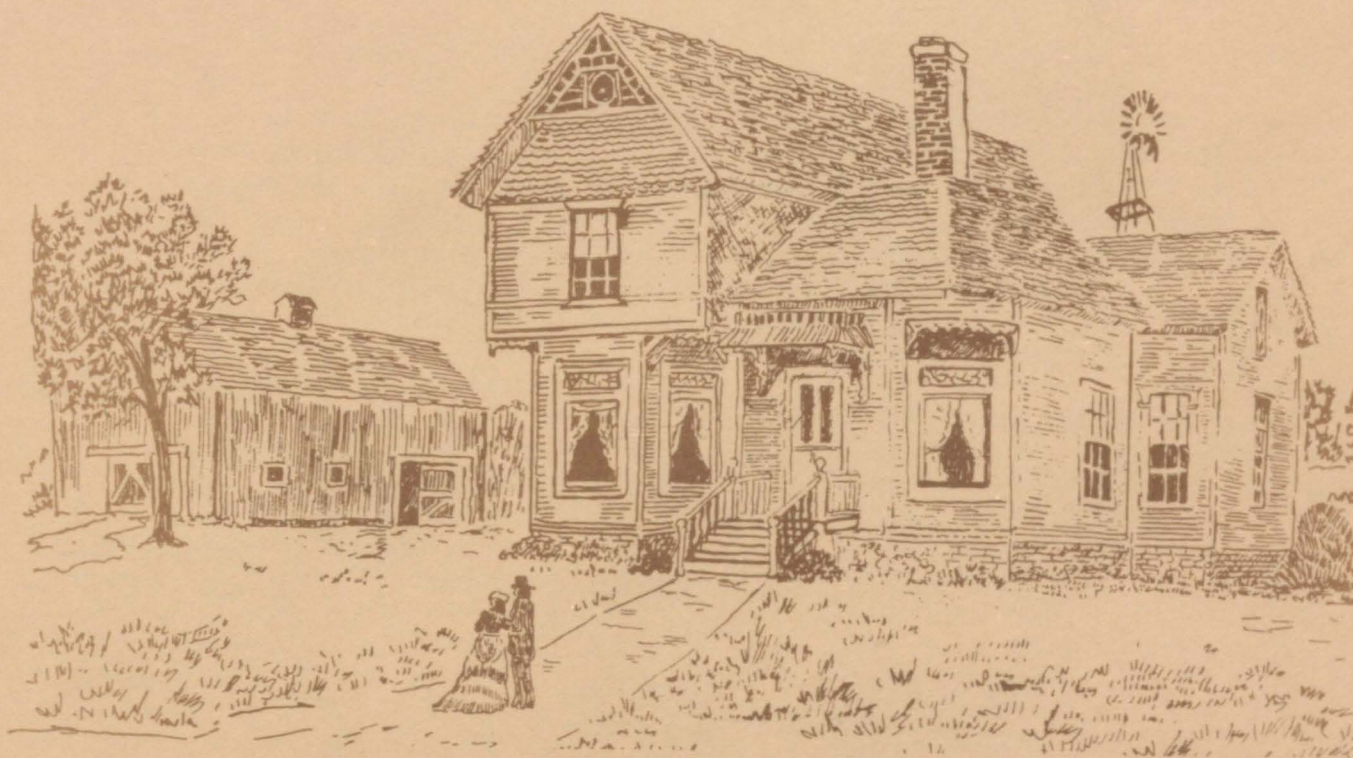


DEEP RIVER GENERAL STORE





W. H. WOOD GENERAL STORE
AND POST OFFICE



OLIVE WOOD HOME

IN MEMORIAM

The following patrons presented a contribution in memory of their loved ones to defray the cost of printing the first edition of this book in 1976.

Blum, Gilbert and Blanche
 Calpha, Harry
 Calpha, Lenore (Boyd)
 Doffin, Philipene M. (Weis)
 Franz, Leonard and Clara (Johnson)
 Gartner, Cora
 Goodrich, Mrs. Henrietta (Sullivan)
 Halsted, Kenneth and Almira
 Hein, George and Matilda
 Hire, Mrs. Edith
 Morris, Ellen
 Reed, Herman
 Saberniak, Albert and Thelma
 Vlastic, Joseph and Loretta
 Waltz, Anna
 Waltz, George and Nancy

Also,

In Memory of:	Charles Boyd by Lucille (Boyd) Solman
In Memory of:	Warren Boyd by Lucille (Boyd) Solman
In Memory of:	Charles C. Coppess by Mrs. Helen Coppess
In Memory of:	George Franz
In Memory of:	Frank H. & Amelia (Krieter) Halfman by Margaret and Helen Halfman
In Memory of:	Alice Halsted by Jean Halsted
In Memory of:	Dr. George Iddings
In Memory of:	Hugh Lee Mohler by Mrs. Bertha Mohler
In Memory of:	Donald Niksch by Ruth Niksch
In Memory of:	Mrs. Lillian Pierce
In Memory of:	SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church by Mrs. Toney Smith
In Memory of:	Herbert and Nora Saxton
In Memory of:	Mr. and Mrs. Henry Vonderheid

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ROSS TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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* - Members who passed away in 1991

Those wishing to join the Merrillville-Ross Township Historical Society or those wishing to donate articles for future use in a museum should contact any of the above members for complete details.

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